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HILAIRE BELLOC  
G. K. CHESTERTON  
E. V. LUCAS  
ROBERT LYND  
A. A. MILNE  
J. B. PRIESTLEY

SEVENTH EDITION



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

THE popularity of *Essays by Modern Masters* has suggested to the publishers that the addition of a second series to the Modern Classics would be generally welcomed in the schools. A new volume has accordingly been planned on the old lines. While the name of J. B. Priestley has now been added to those of the five earlier masters, the Editor has still preferred a representative set of essays from a few essayists to a more limited selection from a great number—an arrangement which gives the reader a better chance of appreciating the special qualities of each writer's work.

The books from which the various essays by permission of authors and publisher have been extracted are indicated in the list of contents.

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# HILAIRE BELLOC

## THE SINGER

THE other day as I was taking my pleasure along a river called "The River of Gold," from which one can faintly see the enormous mountains which shut off Spain from Europe, as I walked, I say, along the Maille, or ordered and planted quay of the town, I heard, a long way off, a man singing. His singing was of that very deep and vibrating kind which Gascons take for natural singing, and which makes one think of hollow metal and of well-tuned bells, for it sounds through the air in waves; the farther it is the more it booms, and it occupies the whole place in which it rises. There is no other singing like it in the world. He was too far off for any words to be heard, and I confess I was too occupied in listening to the sound of the music to turn round at first and notice who it was that sang; but as he gradually approached between the houses towards the river upon that happy summer morning, I left the sight of the houses, and myself sauntered nearer to him to learn more about him and his song.

I saw a man of fifty or thereabouts, not a mountaineer, but a man of the plains—tall and square, large and full of travel. His face was brown like chestnut wood; his eyes were grey but ardent; his brows were fierce, strong, and of the colour of shining metal, half-way between iron and silver. He bore himself as though he were still well able to wrestle with younger men in the fairs, and his step, though extremely slow (for he was intent upon his song)

was determined as it was deliberate. I came yet nearer and saw that he carried a few pots and pans and also a kind of kit in a bag: in his right hand was a long and polished staff of ashwood, shod with iron; and still as he went he sang. The song now rose nearer me and more loud, and at last I could distinguish the words, which were, in English, these:

“Men that cook in copper know well how difficult is the cleaning of copper. All cooking is a double labour unless the copper is properly tinned.”

This couplet rhymed well in the tongue he used, which was not Languedoc nor even Béarnais, but ordinary French of the north, well chosen, rhythmical, and sure. When he had sung this couplet once, glancing, as he sang it, nobly upwards to the left and the right at the people in their houses, he paused a little, set down his kit and his pots and his pans, and leant upon his stick to rest. A man in white clothes with a white square cap on his head ran out of a neighbouring door and gave him a saucepan, which he accepted with a solemn salute, and then, as though invigorated by such good fortune, he lifted his burdens again and made a dignified progress of some few steps forward, nearer to the place in which I stood. He halted again and resumed his song.

It had a quality in it which savoured at once of the pathetic and of the steadfast: its few notes recalled to me those classical themes which conceal something of dreadful fate and of necessity, but are yet instinct with dignity and with the majestic purpose of the human will, and Athens would have envied such a song. The words were these:

“All kinds of game, I zard, Quails, and Wild Pigeon, are best roasted upon a spit; but what spit is so clean and fresh as a spit that has been newly tinned?”

When he had sung this verse by way of challenge to the world, he halted once more and mopped his face with a great handkerchief, waiting, perhaps, for a spit to be brought; but none came. The spits of the town were new, and though the people loved his singing, yet they were of too active and sensible a kind to waste pence for nothing. When he saw that spits were not forthcoming, he lifted up his kit again and changed his subject just by so much as might attract another sort of need. He sang—but now more violently, and as though with a worthy protest:

Le lièvre et le lapin,  
Quand c'est bien cuit, ça fait du bien.

That is: "Hare and rabbit, properly cooked, do one great good," and then added after the necessary pause and with a gesture half of offering and half of disdain: "But who can call them well cooked if the tinning of the pot has been neglected?" And into this last phrase he added notes which hinted of sadness and of disillusion. It was very fine.

As he was now quite near me and ready, through the slackness of trade, to enter into a conversation, I came quite close and said to him, "I wish you good day," to which he answered, "And I to you and the company," though there was no company.

Then I said, "You sing and so advertise your trade?"

He answered, "I do. It lifts the heart, it shortens the way, it attracts the attention of the citizens, it guarantees good work."

"In what way," said I, "does it guarantee good work?"

"The man," he answered, "who sings loudly, clearly, and well, is a man in good health. He is master of himself. He is strict and well-managed. When people hear him they say, 'Here is a prompt, ready, and serviceable man.



He is not afraid. There is no rudeness in him. He is urbane, swift, and to the point. There is method in this fellow.' All these things may be in the man who does not sing, but singing makes them apparent. Therefore in our trade we sing."

"But there must be some," I said, "who do not sing and who yet are good tinnerns."

At this he gave a little shrug of his shoulders and spread down his hands slightly but imperatively. "There are such," said he. "They are even numerous. But while they get less trade they are also less happy men. For I would have you note (saving your respect and that of the company) that this singing has a quality. It does good within as well as without. It pleases the singer in his very self as well as brings him work and clients."

Then I said, "You are right, and I wish to God I had something to tin; let me, however, tell you something in place of the trade I cannot offer you. All things are trine, as you have heard" (here he nodded), "and your singing does, therefore, not a double but a triple good. For it gives you pleasure within, it brings in trade and content from others, and it delights the world around you. It is an admirable thing."

When he heard this he was very pleased. He took off his enormous hat, which was of straw and as big as a wheel, and said, "Sir, to the next meeting!" and went off singing with a happier and more triumphant note, "Carrots, onions, lentils, and beans, depend upon the tinner for their worth to mankind."

## THE HONEST MAN AND THE DEVIL

A MAN who prided himself very justly upon his uncompromising temper and love of truth had the misfortune the other night to wake at about three o'clock in the morning and to see the Devil standing by his bedside, who begged him that he (the Honest Man) should sell him (the Devil) his soul.

"I will do nothing of the kind," said the Honest Man in a mixture of sleepiness and alarm.

"Very well," said the Devil, quite obviously put out, "you shall go your own way; but I warn you, if you will have nothing to do with me I will have nothing to do with you!"

"I ask for nothing better," said the Honest Man, turning over on his right side to get to sleep again, "I desire to follow Truth in all her ways, and to have nothing more to do with you." With these words he began a sort of regular and mechanical breathing which warned the Devil that the interview was now at an end. The Devil, therefore, with a grunt, went out of the bedroom and shut the door smartly behind him, shaking all the furniture; which was a rude thing to do, but he was very much annoyed.

Next morning the Honest Man, before going out to business, dictated his letters as was his wont into a phonograph; this little instrument (which, by the way, had been invented by the Devil though he did not know it) is commonly used in the houses of the busy for the reception of dictated correspondence, comic verse, love sonnets, and so forth; and if the busy also live by their pen, the



phonograph spares them the use of this instrument. The Honest Man of whom I speak had no such profession; he used the phonograph for his daily correspondence, which was enormous; he dictated his answers into it before leaving his private house, and during the forenoon his secretary would take down those answers by reversing the machine and putting it at a slower pace so that what it said could easily go down upon the typewriter.

At about half-past five the Honest Man came back from his business, and was met by his secretary in a very nervous fashion.

"I fear, sir," said the secretary, "that there must be some mistake about your correspondence. I have taken it down literally as was my duty, and certainly the voice sounded like yours, but the letters are hardly such as I would post without your first reading them. I have therefore forbore to sign them in your name, and have kept them to show you upon your return. Here they are. Pray, pray read them in seclusion, and advise me at the earliest moment." With these words the secretary handed the documents to his bewildered employer, and went out of the room with his eyes full of nervous tears.

The Honest Man put on a pair of gold spectacles, exchanged these for some gold pince-nez, hummed twice, then began to read. This is what he read:

I

The Laurels,

Putney Heath, S.W.

November 9.

DEAR LADY WHERNSIDE,

Yes, I will come to Whernside House next Thursday. I do not know you well, and I shall feel out of place among

your friends, but I need not stop long. I think that to be seen at such a gathering, even for but a few moments, is of general advantage to my business; otherwise I should certainly not come. One thing I beg of you, which is that you will not ask me a number of private questions under the illusion that you are condescending. The habit is very offensive to me, and it is the chief drawback I feel in visiting your house. I may add that though I am of the middle classes, like your late father, I have a very pretty taste in furniture, and the inside of your house simply makes me sick.

I am,

Very faithfully yours,

JOHN ROE.

## II

The Laurels,

Putney Heath, S.W.

November 9.

DEAR SIR,

No; I will not entertain your proposal to use the Imperial British Suction Apparatus upon my ships. It may be a very good apparatus, and it might possibly increase my profits by £2,000 in the year, but the fact is that I am so well to do it is hardly worth my while to bother about these little things. The bother of arranging the new installation, and the risk that, after all, my men might not know how to use it, has decided me. I note what you say, that the French, the German, the Italian, the Russian, and the United States Governments have all bought your patent for use in their Navies; but it does not influence me one jot. What are they, after all,

but foreigners? Besides which, it is my experience that somehow or other I muddle through, and I hate having to think.

We are,

Your obedient Servants,

JOHN ROE & COMPANY.

### III

The Laurels,

Putney Heath, S.W.

November 9.

DEAR DOCTOR BURTON,

I wish you would come round this afternoon or to-morrow morning and see my eldest child, James. There is nothing whatever the matter with him, but his mother is in a flurry, because some children with whom he went out to a party the other evening have developed mumps, and his voice is husky, which she idiotically believes to be a symptom of that disease. Your visit will cost me two guineas; but it is well worth my while to spend that sum if only to avoid her intolerable fussing. My advice to you as man to man is, to look at the child's tongue, give him some plain water by way of medicine, and go off again as quick as you can. Your fee will be the same in any case, and it is ridiculous to waste time over such business.

I am,

Your sincere friend,

JOHN ROE.

## IV

The Laurels,

Putney Heath, S.W.

November 9.

DEAR DOCTOR MILLS,

I enclose five guineas and a subscription for your new church. I confess that I do not clearly see what advantage this expenditure will do me, and I should have some hesitancy in setting down in black and white my reasons for sending you the money at all. Your style of preaching is monotonous, your doctrines (if they are really your doctrines) are particularly offensive to me; and after all we could get along perfectly well with the old church. At bottom I think this kind of thing is a sort of blackmail; you know I cannot afford to have my name left out of your subscription list, and probably the same motive is causing many another sensible neighbour of mine to part most reluctantly with a portion of his property. Perhaps the best way out of it would be to form a sort of union and to strike all together against your exactions; but I cannot be at the pains of wasting any more time upon the matter, so here's your five guineas and be hanged to you!

Very faithfully and respectfully yours,

JOHN ROE.

## V

The Laurels,

Putney Heath, S.W.

November 9.

DEAR SIR,

I have received your estimate for the new conservatory; I have figured it out and undoubtedly you

will lose upon the contract. I therefore accept it without reserve and beg you to begin work as soon as possible. I fully appreciate your motive in making so extraordinary a bargain: you know that I shall make further alterations to the house, and you hope by throwing away a sprat to catch a whale. Do not imagine that I shall be misled in this regard. The next alteration I have to make I will accept the tender of some other builder as gullible as yourself, and so forth to the end of the chapter. And I am,

Your obedient servant,  
JOHN ROE.

VI  
The Laurels,  
Putney Heath, S.W.

November 9.

MY DEAR ALICE,

I will not send the small sum which you ask me as a brother to afford you, though I am well aware that it would save you very poignant anxiety. My reason for acting thus is that a little annoyance is caused me when I have to disburse even a small sum without the chance of any possible return, and especially when I have to do it to benefit some one who cannot make things uncomfortable for me if I refuse. I have a sort of sentimental feeling about you, because you are my sister, and to that extent my refusal does give me a slight, though a passing sense of irrision. But that will very soon disappear, and when I balance it against the definite sacrifice of a sum of money, however small, I do not hesitate for a moment. Please do not write to me again.

Your affectionate brother,  
JOHN ROE.



VII

The Laurels,  
Putney Heath, S.W.

November 9.

DEAR SIR,

I enclose a cheque for £250, my annual subscription to the local War Chest of the Party. I beg you particularly to note that this subscription makes me the creditor of the Party to the extent of over £3,000, counting interest at one above bank rate from the first subscription. I have carefully gone into this and there can be no error. I would further have you note that I desire no reward or recognition for my disbursement of this sum beyond the baronetcy of which we spoke the last time I visited you, in the presence of a third party; and I must conclude by assuring you that any lengthy negotiation would be extremely distasteful to me. You need not fear my attitude in the approaching election; I am quite indifferent to parliamentary honours, I will take the chair five times and no more; I am good for one large garden party, three dinners, and a set of fireworks. I will have absolutely nothing to do with the printing, and I am,

Always at your service,

JOHN ROE.

When the Honest Man had perused these letters he decided that they should not be posted in their present form; but upon attempting to amend them he found himself singularly lacking in those phrases which he could usually discover so readily for the purposes of his correspondence.

He sent, therefore, for his secretary, and told him to re-write the letters himself according to his own judgment, which that gentleman did with singular skill and dispatch, maintaining the cheques as drafted and putting every matter in its proper light.

That night the Honest Man, who was sleeping soundly, was more annoyed than ever at the re-appearance of the Devil at his bedside in the middle of the night.

"Now," said the Devil, "have I brought you to your senses?"

"No," said the Honest Man, composing himself for sleep as before, "you have not. You should have remembered that I have a secretary."

"Oh, the devil!" said the Devil impatiently, "one cannot be thinking of everything!" And he went out even more noisily than the night before.

In this way the Honest Man saved his soul and at the same time his face, which, if it were the less valuable of the two organs, was none the less of considerable moment to him in this mundane sphere.

## THE CHANNEL

**F**RIENDS of mine, friends all, and you also, publishers, colonials, and critics, do you know that particular experience for which I am trying to find words? Do you know that glamour in the mind which arises and transforms our thought when we see the things that the men who made us saw—the things of a long time ago, the origins? I think everybody knows that glamour, but very few people know where to find it.

Every man knows that he has in him the power for such revelations, and every man wonders in what strange places he may come upon them. There are men also (very rich) who have considered all the world and wandered over it, seeking those first experiences and trying to feel as felt the earlier men in a happier time—yet these few rich men have not so felt and have not so found the things which they desire. I have known men who have thought to find them in the mountains, but would not climb them simply enough and refused to leave their luxuries behind, and so lost everything, and might as well have been walking in a dirty town at home for all the little good that the mountains did to them. And I know men who have thought to find this memory and desire in foreign countries, in Africa, hunting great beasts such as our fathers hunted; yet even these have not relit those old embers, which if they lie dead and dark in a man make his whole soul dusty and useless, but which if they be once rekindled can make him part of all the centuries.

Yet there is a simple and an easy way to find what the



men who made us found, and to see the world as they saw it, and to take a bath, as it were, in the freshness of beginnings; and that is to go to work as cheaply and as hardly as you can, and only as much away from men as they were away from men, and not to read or to write or to think, but to eat and drink and use the body in many immediate ways, which are at the feet of every man. Every man who will walk for some days carelessly, sleeping rough when he must, or in poor inns, and making for some one place direct because he desires to see it, will know the thing I mean. And there is a better way still of which I shall now speak: I mean, to try the seas in a little boat not more than twenty-five feet long, preferably decked, of shallow draught, such as can enter into all creeks and havens, and so simply rigged that by oneself, or with a friend at most, one can wander all over the world.

Certainly every man that goes to sea in a little boat of this kind learns terror and salvation, happy living, air, danger, exultation, glory, and repose at the end; and they are not words to him, but, on the contrary, realities which will afterwards throughout his life give the mere words a full meaning. And for this experiment there lies at our feet, I say, the Channel.

It is the most marvellous sea in the world—the most suited for these little adventures; it is crammed with strange towns, differing one from the other; it has two opposite people upon either side, and hills and varying climates, and the hundred shapes and colours of the earth, here rocks, there sand, there cliffs, and there marshy shores. It is a little world. And what is more, it is a kind of inland sea.

People will not understand how narrow it is, crossing it hurriedly in great steamships; nor will they make it a home

for pleasure unless they are rich and can have great boats; yet they should, for on its water lies the best stage for playing out the old drama by which the soul of a healthy man is kept alive. For instance, listen to this story:

The sea being calm, and the wind hot, uncertain, and light from the east, leaving oily gaps on the water, and continually dying down, I drifted one morning in the strong ebb to the South Goodwin Lightship, wondering what to do. There was a haze over the land and over the sea, and through the haze great ships a long way off showed, one or two of them, like oblong targets which one fires at with guns. They hardly moved in spite of all their canvas set, there was so little breeze. So I drifted in the slow ebb past the South Goodwin, and I thought: "What is all this drifting and doing nothing? Let us play the fool, and see if there are no adventures left."

So I put my little boat about until the wind took her from forward, such as it was, and she crawled out to sea.

It was a dull, uneasy morning, hot and silent, and the wind, I say, was hardly a wind, and most of the time the sails flapped uselessly.

But after eleven o'clock the wind first rose, and then shifted a little, and then blew light but steady; and then at last she heeled and the water spoke under her bows, and still she heeled and ran, until in the haze I could see no more land; but ever so far out there were no seas, for the light full breeze was with the tide, the tide ebbing out as a strong and as a silent man in anger, down the hidden parallel valleys of the narrow sea. And I held this little wind till about two o'clock, when I drank wine and ate bread and meat at the tiller, for I had them by me, and just

afterwards, still through a thick haze of heat, I saw Gris-nez, a huge ghost, right up against and above me; and I wondered, for I had crossed the Channel, now for the first time, and knew now what it felt like to see new land.

Though I knew nothing of the place, I had this much sense, that I said to myself: "The tide is right down Channel, racing through the hidden valleys under the narrow sea, so it will all go down together and all come up together, and the flood will come on this foreign side much at the same hour that it does on the home side." My boat lay to the east and the ebb tide held her down, and I lit a pipe and looked at the French hills and thought about them and the people in them, and England which I had left behind, and I was delighted with the loneliness of the sea; and still I waited for the flood.

But in a little while the chain made a rattling noise, and she lay quite slack and swung oddly; and then there were little boiling and eddying places in the water, and the water seemed to come up from underneath sometimes, and altogether it behaved very strangely, and this was the turn of the tide. Then the wind dropped also, and for a moment she lollopped about, till at last, after I had gone below and straightened things, I came on deck to see that she had turned completely round, and that the tide at last was making up my way, towards Calais, and her chain was taut and her nose pointed down Channel, and a little westerly breeze, a little draught of air, came up cool along the tide.

When this came I was very glad, for I saw that I could end my adventure before night. So I pulled up the anchor and fished it, and then turned with the tide under me, and the slight half-felt breeze just barely filling the mainsail

(the sheet was slack, so powerless was the wind), and I ran up along that high coast, watching eagerly every new thing; but I kept some way out for fear of shoals, till after three good hours under the reclining sun of afternoon, which glorified the mist, I saw, far off, the roofs and spires of a town, and a low pier running well out to sea, and I knew that it must be Calais. And I ran for these piers, careless of how I went, for it was already half of the spring flood tide, and everything was surely well covered for so small a boat, and I ran up the fairway in between the piers, and saw Frenchmen walking about and a great gun peeping up over its earthwork, and plenty of clean new masonry. And a man came along and showed me where I could lie; but I was so strange to the place that I would not take a berth, but lay that night moored to an English ship.

And when I had eaten and drunk and everything was stowed away and darkness had fallen, I went on deck, and for a long time sat silent, smoking a pipe and watching the enormous lighthouse of Calais, which is built right in the town, and which turns round and round above one all night long.

And I thought: "Here is a wonderful thing! I have crossed the Channel in this little boat, and I know now what the sea means that separates France from England. I have strained my eyes for shore through a haze. I have seen new lands, and I feel as men do who have dreamt dreams."

But in reality I had had very great luck indeed, and had had no right to cross, for my coming back was to be far more difficult and dreadful, and I was to suffer many things before again I could see tall England, close by me, out of the sea.

But how I came back, and of the storm, and of its majesty, and of how the boat and I survived, I will tell you another time, only imploring you to do the same; not to tell of it, I mean, but to sail it in a little boat.



## "ULTIMA RATIO"

I CAME out of the sea the other day into a little English harbour and landed there. After I had put away everything on board and left my boat in charge of the old man who looks after her in the tidal lock, I stood waiting outside the railway station till my train should come and take me home. And there it was that I saw a German gun.

They had put it up for a trophy. Never was a war with trophies so promiscuous! Never was a war with trophies so much of an anti-climax! The nearest thing to a real trophy which they have had since this war ended was the great pyramid of guns in the middle of the Champs Élysées, all heaped together pell-mell with the cock crowing on the top of them. But I never see a Bavarian or a Prussian gun stuck up mournfully in a little English town without thinking of the English and French guns which are knocking about somewhere among the German States. And what is more, I never see one without thinking how poor a trophy the modern gun makes; especially the German gun, the carriage of which always reminds me of rather heavy and bad agricultural machinery. I think of the trophies of old, of the fine bronze guns taken in the wars against the French, and of the flags in the churches, and especially that amazing, ragged, dusty, double line of them in the Invalides in Paris, which looks down slantwise through a yellow window and sees, in its solemn gulf below, the huge marble sarcophagus of Napoleon.

However, there was the gun. And as the time of waiting

for a train is the most empty time in the world (because you cannot limit it and you do not know whether it is long enough to start a geometrical problem or some other entertaining pastime), I filled it up by walking round that gun.

I guessed it to be a 150, say six inch, but I judge these things badly. At any rate it was a heavy piece, not a howitzer.

I know not what it is, it may be youth and its permanent memories, but when I see a gun firing at the moon, cocked up at its utmost elevation, I feel that the weapon has suffered an indignity. It is as though it were an animal going through a performance. For the natural position of a gun is some slight elevation for a normal range, and not this isolated, head-in-the-air, barking attitude which the guns of captivity too often wear. They are noblest, these poor prisoners, when they stand level with the earth as though they were firing at close range in the hopeless effort to stop an advancing wave.

Well, anyhow, there it was, all lifted up, absurdly, like a dog baying.

Then, when I got nearer to the gun, and looked closely at it, I saw something which I have seen so often in a million German things that it has become a commonplace for them in my mind, but I know it is perilous to whisper it on this side of the Channel. The thing that has become a commonplace in my mind is the fact that Germans cannot *make*, but can only *copy*. They have many negative virtues, very unsuited to their vast aberrations. They are fairly industrious, very simple, normally kind and domestic, and in their dreamy way they half catch now and then what the older civilization of Europe expresses in strong and positive beauty. But they copy. They are impressed. They are a soft metal and ancient Europe is the die. What

made me think of this commonplace was the seeing on that gun—actually engraved upon a modern gun!—a poor little copy of Louis XIV. Think of it! After now much more than two hundred years! There it was before my astonished eyes, and I could hardly believe it; the motto of the great king copied upon a Hohenzollern gun! It was like reading the “*Honi soit qui mal y pense*” of the Plantagenets on the Menu of a Cosmopolitan Hotel. . . .

For Louis XIV in his proudest moment had engraved upon his cannon, just above the middle point where cannons turn upon their trunnions, a great “L” written in a flourishing script with a crown above it, and then along the breach, just above the touch-hole, he had had engraved upon a sort of scroll the phrase “*Ultima ratio regum.*” It was a famous phrase in Europe then. The greatest of English writers made good fun of it when he said: “It seems that his arguments have been turned against himself.”

That was Louis XIV’s manner; and, I say, I thought everybody had forgotten it. I thought that no one remembered that motto except a few miserable people like myself who potter about doing useless things. But I was wrong. The last King of Prussia, the last of the Hohenzollerns, the man upon whom the famous oracle of the thirteenth century has fallen, *he* remembered it—William II, last and most grotesque German Emperor, was responsible for this silly thing.

For there on that gun in the wretched little, absurd little, squalid little station square of a little port, with no one to pay it the honour even of curiosity, I remarked graven things slavishly copied from Louis XIV. First, just above the trunnion, there was a crown and under it, in exactly the same flourishing script of the seventeenth century, the two letters “W. R.” interlaced, and between them an eagle



looking fiercely to its right. . . . So I take it that this gun was worked for the King of Prussia.

Then at the breach there was a scroll, and in the scroll was a similar script just like that of Louis XIV. And the motto ran: "*Ultima ratio regis*"—"regis," mind you, not "*regum*."

We all have the defects of our qualities, and there does go with the German, even with the Prussian, simplicity, an astonishing lack of critical power. "*Ultima ratio regum*" is one thing: "*Ultima ratio regis*" is quite another. It reminded me of the famous quotation: "Frailty, thy name is lady."

Now why was that script ever engraven? (The date was 1909.) Against whom was this ephemeral Prussian king going to use his argument—his last argument? I carry back my mind to 1909, and I can remember no one against whom at that moment he was preparing to argue in such a fashion. It was a quiet time. There was no worry within the Prussian state; Agadir had not been heard of. Yet that was the date and that was the motto. And there was the eagle and there was the inscribed flourishing initial, and there was the crown.

I know very well that some, perhaps most, of my readers—of those who do me the honour to read this rambling—will think me a fool for what I am next to say. But I confess a sentimentality towards that gun. When I was a boy and they were teaching me to drive in the artillery school at Toul they used to give us a sort of vile body on which to experiment our horses and ourselves: old guns of '48—old bronze guns. And these the French had made with great art. They were beautiful things. What touched me most about them was that each of them had a name. One was called "Liberty," another "The Voice of the People,"

another “Equality,” and so on. It is a human instinct and a just one to give names to things. It is part of the truth that we ourselves are made in the image of God. Why, even my boat, which is but a material, inanimate body (may She forgive me), has a name. I must tell you, though you ridicule me, that when I saw that German gun I wished it also had a name.

And what sort of name should it have had? It could not have had a name for an abstract virtue or idea, like a French gun. It might have had the name of a great German man, but the names of such men are soon exhausted. It might have had the name of a jest, for jests are innumerable; but then the reader would have had to understand the jest which would probably have been local—like “Grandmamma” or “Archie” or the huge French gun I knew in my youth, which the men of my youth called “Silence in the Ranks”—an enormous piece on the top of a fort. Indeed, I cannot conceive what name could have been given to this one gun out of so many guns. Still I wish it had had a name.

If it had had a name I could look back on it, now that I have left it, and say to myself: “What fun I had in those few minutes before the train came in, examining the outward expression of —, his character, his toilet, his elevation, and all the rest of it!”

But the gun had no name, and so I must still carry it in my mind anonymously as “the German gun.”

Of all the hundreds of guns that I have seen lying about or being carried on trucks or drawn by horses, or standing in the great factories during these years, only one gun has touched me more, and this also was a German gun. I saw it in February, 1915. It lay derelict in a ditch close to the road near the river Ourcq, within an hour of Meaux, and

Paris not forty miles away. It was perhaps the extreme gun of all the invasion; the mark of the high tide. It lay pitifully on one side, like the corpse in Beaudelaire's poem. One wheel it had not at all, but only the axle sticking up into the air, and the other wheel was rotted into the ground. And there lay the poor dead German gun like a fool.

I said to my companion: "Why does not someone of the peasants take it away and keep it for a relic?" To which my companion answered in the hard French fashion (which differs so much from the more human English way): "Why should he?"

## ON AN UNKNOWN COUNTRY

TEN years ago, I think, or perhaps a little less or perhaps a little more, I came in the Euston Road—that thoroughfare of Empire—upon a young man, a little younger than myself, whom I knew, though I did not know him very well. It was drizzling and the second-hand booksellers (who are rare in this thoroughfare) were beginning to put out the waterproof covers over their wares. This disturbed my acquaintance, because he was engaged upon buying a cheap book that should really satisfy him.

Now this was difficult, for he had no hobby, and the book which should satisfy him must be one that should describe or summon up, or, it is better to say, hint at—or, the Theologians would say, reveal, or the Platonists would say *recall*—the Unknown Country, which he thought was his very home.

I had known his habit of seeking such books for two years, and had half wondered at it and half sympathized. It was an appetite partly satisfied by almost any work that brought to him the vision of a place in the mind which he had always intensely desired, but to which, as he had then long guessed, and as he is now quite certain, no human paths directly lead. He would buy with avidity travels to the moon and to the planets, from the most worthless to the best. He loved Utopias and did not disregard even so prosaic a category as books of real travel, so long as by exaggeration or by a glamour in the style they gave him a full draught of that drug which he desired. Whether this

satisfaction the young man sought was a satisfaction in illusion (I have used the word "drug" with hesitation), or whether it was, as he persistently maintained, the satisfaction of a memory, or whether it was, as I am often tempted to think, the satisfaction of a thirst which will ultimately be quenched in every human soul I cannot tell. Whatever it was, he sought it with more than the appetite with which a hungry man seeks food. He sought it with something that was not hunger but passion.

That evening he found a book.

It is well known that men purchase with difficulty second-hand books upon the stalls, and that in some mysterious way the sellers of these books are content to provide a kind of library for the poorer and more eager of the public, and a library admirable in this, that it is accessible upon every shelf and exposes a man to no control, except that he must not steal, and even in this it is nothing but the force of public law that interferes. My friend therefore would in the natural course of things have dipped into the book and left it there; but a better luck persuaded him. Whether it was the beginning of the rain or a sudden loneliness in such terrible weather and in such a terrible town, compelling him to seek a more permanent companionship with another mind, or whether it was my sudden arrival and shame lest his poverty should appear in his refusing to buy the book—whatever it was, he bought that same. And since he bought the book I also have known it and have found in it, as he did, the most complete expression that I know of the Unknown Country, of which he was a citizen—oddly a citizen, as I then thought, wisely as I now conceive.

All that can best be expressed in words should be



expressed in verse, but verse is a slow thing to create; nay, it is not really created: it is a secretion of the mind, it is a pearl that gathers round some irritant and slowly expresses the very essence of beauty and of desire that has lain long, potential and unexpressed, in the mind of the man who secretes it. God knows that this Unknown Country has been hit off in verse a hundred times. If I were perfectly sure of my accents I would quote two lines from the *Odyssey* in which the Unknown Country stands out as clear as does a sudden vision from a mountain ridge when the mist lifts after a long climb and one sees beneath one an unexpected and glorious land; such a vision as greets a man when he comes over the Saldeu into the simple and secluded Republic of the Andorrans. Then, again, the Germans in their idioms have flashed it out, I am assured, for I remember a woman telling me that there was a song by Schiller which exactly gave the revelation of which I speak. In English, thank Heaven, emotion of this kind, emotion necessary to the life of the soul, is very abundantly furnished. As, who does not know the lines:

Blessed with that which is not in the word  
Of man nor his conception: Blessed Land!

Then there is also the whole group of glimpses which Shakespeare amused himself by scattering as might a man who had a great oak chest full of jewels and who now and then, out of kindly fun, poured out a handful and gave them to his guests. I quote from memory, but I think certain of the lines run more or less like this:

Look how the dawn in russet mantle clad  
Stands on the steep of yon high eastern hill.



And again:

Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.

Which moves me to digress. . . . How on earth did any living man pull it off as well as that? I remember arguing with a man who very genuinely thought the talent of Shakespeare was exaggerated in public opinion, and discovering at the end of a long wrangle that he was not considering Shakespeare as a poet. But as a poet, then, how on earth did he manage it?

Keats did it continually, especially in the *Hyperion*. Milton does it so well in the Fourth Book of *Paradise Lost* that I defy any man of a sane understanding to read the whole of that book before going to bed and not to wake up next morning as though he had been on a journey. William Morris does it, especially in the verses about a prayer over the corn; and as for Virgil, the poet Virgil, he does it continually like a man whose very trade it is. Who does not remember the swimmer who saw Italy from the top of the wave?

Here also let me digress. How do the poets do it? (I do not mean where do they get their power, as I was asking just now of Shakespeare, but how do the words, simple or complex, produce that effect?) Very often there is not any adjective, sometimes not any qualification at all: often only one subject with its predicate and its statement and its object. There is never any detail of description, but the scene rises, more vivid in colour, more exact in outline, more wonderful in influence, than anything we can see with our eyes, except perhaps those things we see in the few moments of intense emotion which come to us, we know not whence, and expand out into completion and into manhood.

Catullus does it. He does it so powerfully in the opening lines of

*Vesper adest . . .*

that a man reads the first couplet of that Hymeneal, and immediately perceives the Apennines.

The nameless translator of the Highland song does it, especially when he advances that battering line:

And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

They all do it, bless their hearts, the poets, which leads me back again to the mournful reflection that it cannot be done in prose. . . .

Little friends, my readers, I wish it could be done in prose, for if it could, and if I knew how to do it, I would here present to you that Unknown Country in such a fashion that every landscape which you should see henceforth would be transformed, by the appearing through it, the shining and uplifting through it, of the Unknown Country upon which reposes this tedious and repetitive world.

Now you may say to me that prose can do it, and you may quote to me the end of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, a very remarkable piece of writing. Or, better still, as we shall be more agreed upon it, the general impression left upon the mind by the book which set me writing—Mr. Hudson's *Crystal Age*. I do not deny that prose can do it, but when it does it, it is hardly to be called prose, for it is inspired. Note carefully the passages in which the trick is worked in prose (for instance, in the story of Ruth in the Bible, where it is done with complete success), you will perceive an incantation and a spell. Indeed this same episode of Ruth in exile has inspired two splendid passages of European

verse, of which it is difficult to say which is the more national, and therefore the greatest, Victor Hugo's in the *Légende des Siècles* or Keats's astounding four lines.

. . . . .

There was a shepherd the other day up at Findon Fair who had come from the east by Lewes with sheep, and who had in his eyes that reminiscence of horizons which makes the eyes of shepherds and of mountaineers different from the eyes of other men. He was occupied when I came upon him in pulling Mr. Fulton's sheep by one hind leg so that they should go the way they were desired to go. It happened that day that Mr. Fulton's sheep were not sold, and the shepherd went driving them back through Findon village, and up on to the high Downs. I went with him to hear what he had to say, for shepherds talk quite differently from other men. And when we came on to the shoulder of Chanctonbury and looked down upon the Weald, which stretched out like the Plains of Heaven, he said to me: "I never come here but it seems like a different place down below, and as though it were not the place where I have gone afoot with sheep under the hills. It seems different when you are looking down at it." He added that he had never known why. Then I knew that he, like myself, was perpetually in perception of the Unknown Country, and I was very pleased. But we did not say anything more to each other about it until we got down into Steyning. There we drank together and we still said nothing more about it, so that to this day all we know of the matter is what we knew when we started, and what you knew when I began to write this, and what you are now no further informed upon, namely, that there is an Unknown Country

lying beneath the places that we know, and appearing only in moments of revelation.

Whether we shall reach this country at last or whether we shall not, it is impossible to determine.

## G. K. CHESTERTON

### THE POET AND THE CHEESE

THERE is something creepy in the flat Eastern Counties; a brush of the white feather. There is a stillness, which is rather of the mind than of the bodily senses. Rapid changes and sudden revelations of scenery, even when they are soundless, have something in them analogous to a movement of music, to a crash or a cry. Mountain hamlets spring out on us with a shout, like mountain brigands. Comfortable valleys accept us with open arms and warm words, like comfortable innkeepers. But travelling in the great level lands has a curiously still and lonely quality; lonely even when there are plenty of people on the road and in the market-place. One's voice seems to break an almost elvish silence, and something unreasonably weird in the phrase of the nursery tales, "And he went a little farther and came to another place," comes back into the mind.

In some such mood I came along a lean, pale road south of the Fens, and found myself in a large, quiet, and seemingly forgotten village. It was one of those places that instantly produce a frame of mind which, it may be, one afterwards decks out with unreal details. I dare say that grass did not really grow in the streets, but I came away with a curious impression that it did. I dare say the market-place was not literally lonely and without sign of life, but it left the vague impression of being so. The place was large and even loose in design, yet it had the air of something hidden



away and always overlooked. It seemed shy, like a big yokel; the low roofs seemed to be ducking behind the hedges and railings, and the chimneys holding their breath. I came into it in that dead hour of the afternoon which is neither after lunch nor before tea, nor anything else even on a half-holiday; and I had a fantastic feeling that I had strayed into a lost and extra hour that is not numbered in the twenty-four.

I entered an inn which stood openly in the market-place yet was almost as private as a private house. Those who talk of "public-houses" as if they were all one problem would have been both puzzled and pleased with such a place. In the front window a stout old lady in black with an elaborate cap sat doing a large piece of needlework. She had a kind of comfortable Puritanism about her; and might have been (perhaps she was) the original Mrs. Grundy. A little more withdrawn into the parlour sat a tall, strong, and serious girl, with a face of beautiful honesty and a pair of scissors stuck in her belt, doing a small piece of needlework. Two feet behind them sat a hulking labourer with a humorous face like wood painted scarlet, before a huge mug of mild beer which he had not touched and probably would not touch for hours. On the hearthrug there was an equally motionless cat; and on the table a copy of *Household Words*.

I was conscious of some atmosphere, still and yet bracing, that I had met somewhere in literature. There was poetry in it as well as piety; and yet it was not poetry after my particular taste. It was somehow at once solid and airy. Then I remembered that it was the atmosphere in some of Wordsworth's rural poems; which are full of genuine freshness and wonder, and yet are in some incurable way commonplace. This was strange; for Wordsworth's men



were of the rocks and fells, and not of the fenlands or flats. But perhaps it is the clearness of still water and the mirrored skies of meres and pools that produces this crystalline virtue. Perhaps that is why Wordsworth is called a Lake Poet instead of a mountain poet. Perhaps it is the water that does it. Certainly the whole of that town was like a cup of water given at morning.

After a few sentences exchanged at long intervals in the manner of rustic courtesy, I inquired casually what was the name of the town. The old lady answered that its name was Stilton, and composedly continued her needlework. But I had paused with my mug in air, and was gazing at her with a suddenly arrested concern. "I suppose," I said, "that it has nothing to do with the cheese of that name?" "Oh yes," she answered, with a staggering indifference, "they used to make it here."

I put down my mug with a gravity far greater than her own. "But this place is a Shrinel!" I said. "Pilgrims should be pouring into it from wherever the English legend has endured alive. There ought to be a colossal statue in the market-place of the man who invented Stilton cheese. There ought to be another colossal statue of the first cow who provided the foundations of it. There should be a burnished tablet let into the ground on the spot where some courageous man first ate Stilton cheese, and survived. On the top of a neighbouring hill (if there are any neighbouring hills) there should be a huge model of a Stilton cheese, made of some rich green marble and engraven with some haughty motto: I suggest something like 'Ver non semper viret; sed Stiltonia semper virescit'." The old lady said, "Yes, sir," and continued her domestic occupations.

After a strained and emotional silence, I said, "If I take a meal here to-night can you *give* me any Stilton?"

"No, sir; I'm afraid we haven't got any *Stilton*," said the immovable one, speaking as if it were something thousands of miles away.

"This is awful," I said: for it seemed to me a strange allegory of England as she is now; this little town that had lost its glory and forgotten, so to speak, the meaning of its own name. And I thought it yet more symbolic because from all that old and full and virile life the great cheese was gone; and only the beer remained. And even that will be stolen by the Liberals or adulterated by the Conservatives. Politely disengaging myself, I made my way as quickly as possible to the nearest large, noisy, and nasty town in that neighbourhood, where I sought out the nearest vulgar, tawdry, and avaricious restaurant. There (after trifling with beef, mutton, puddings, pies, and so on) I got a *Stilton* cheese. I was so much moved by my memories that I wrote a sonnet to the cheese. Some critical friends have hinted to me that my sonnet is not strictly new; that it contains "echoes" (as they express it) of some other poem that they have read somewhere. Here, at least, are the lines I wrote:

#### SONNET TO A STILTON CHEESE

Stilton, thou shouldst be living at this hour.  
And so thou art. Nor lovest grace thereby;  
England has need of thee, and so have I—  
She is a Fen. Far as the eye can scour,  
League after grassy league from Lincoln tower  
To Stilton in the fields, she is a Fen.  
Yet this high cheese, by choice of fenland men,  
Like a tall green volcano rose in power.

Plain living and long drinking are no more,  
And pure religion, reading *Household Words*,  
And sturdy manhood, sitting still all day,

Shrink, like this cheese that crumbles to its core;  
While my digestion, like the House of Lords,  
The heaviest burdens on herself doth lay.

I confess I feel myself as if some literary influence, something that has haunted me, were present in this otherwise original poem; but it is hopeless to disentangle it now.

## ON RUNNING AFTER ONE'S HAT

I FEEL an almost savage envy on hearing that London has been flooded in my absence, while I am in the mere country. My own Battersea has been, I understand, particularly favoured as a meeting of the waters. Battersea was already, as I need hardly say, the most beautiful of human localities. Now that it has the additional splendour of great sheets of water, there must be something quite incomparable in the landscape (or waterscape) of my own romantic town. Battersea must be a vision of Venice. The boat that brought the meat from the butcher's must have shot along those lanes of rippling silver with the strange smoothness of the gondola. The green-grocer who brought cabbages to the corner of the Latchmere Road must have leant upon the oar with the unearthly grace of the gondolier. There is nothing so perfectly poetical as an island; and when a district is flooded it becomes an archipelago.

Some consider such romantic views of flood or fire slightly lacking in reality. But really this romantic view of such inconveniences is quite as practical as the other. The true optimist who sees in such things an opportunity for enjoyment is quite as logical and much more sensible than the ordinary "Indignant Ratepayer" who sees in them an opportunity for grumbling. Real pain, as in the case of being burnt at Smithfield or having a toothache, is a positive thing; it can be supported, but scarcely enjoyed. But, after all, our toothaches are the exception, and as for being burnt at Smithfield, it only happens to us at the very

longest intervals. And most of the inconveniences that make men swear or women cry are really sentimental or imaginative inconveniences—things altogether of the mind. For instance, we often hear grown-up people complaining of having to hang about a railway station and wait for a train. Did you ever hear a small boy complain of having to hang about a railway station and wait for a train? No; for to him to be inside a railway station is to be inside a cavern of wonder and a palace of poetical pleasures. Because to him the red light and the green light on the signal are like a new sun and a new moon. Because to him when the wooden arm of the signal falls down suddenly, it is as if a great king had thrown down his staff as a signal and started a shrieking tournament of trains. I myself am of little boys' habit in this matter. They also serve who only stand and wait for the two fifteen. Their meditations may be full of rich and fruitful things. Many of the most purple hours of my life have been passed at Clapham Junction, which is now, I suppose, under water. I have been there in many moods so fixed and mystical that the water might well have come up to my waist before I noticed it particularly. But in the case of all such annoyances, as I have said, everything depends upon the emotional point of view. You can safely apply the test to almost every one of the things that are currently talked of as the typical nuisance of daily life.

For instance, there is a current impression that it is unpleasant to have to run after one's hat. Why should it be unpleasant to the well-ordered and pious mind? Not merely because it is running, and running exhausts one. The same people run much faster in games and sports. The same people run much more eagerly after an uninteresting little leather ball than they will after



a nice silk hat. There is an idea that it is humiliating to run after one's hat; and when people say it is humiliating they mean that it is comic. It certainly is comic; but man is a very comic creature, and most of the things he does are comic—eating, for instance. And the most comic things of all are exactly the things that are most worth doing—such as making love. A man running after a hat is not half so ridiculous as a man running after a wife.

Now a man could, if he felt rightly in the matter, run after his hat with the manliest ardour and the most sacred joy. He might regard himself as a jolly huntsman pursuing a wild animal, for certainly no animal could be wilder. In fact, I am inclined to believe that hat-hunting on windy days will be the sport of the upper classes in the future. There will be a meet of ladies and gentlemen on some high ground on a gusty morning. They will be told that the professional attendants have started a hat in such-and-such a thicket, or whatever be the technical term. Notice that this employment will in the fullest degree combine sport with humanitarianism. The hunters would feel that they were not inflicting pain. Nay, they would feel that they were inflicting pleasure, rich, almost riotous pleasure, upon the people who were looking on. When last I saw an old gentleman running after his hat in Hyde Park, I told him that a heart so benevolent as his ought to be filled with peace and thanks at the thought of how much unaffected pleasure his every gesture and bodily attitude were at that moment giving to the crowd.

The same principle can be applied to every other typical domestic worry. A gentleman trying to get a fly out of the milk or a piece of cork out of his glass of wine often imagines himself to be irritated. Let him think for a moment of the patience of anglers sitting by dark pools,



and let his soul be immediately irradiated with gratification and repose. Again, I have known some people of very modern views driven by their distress to the use of theological terms to which they attached no doctrinal significance, merely because a drawer was jammed tight and they could not pull it out. A friend of mine was particularly afflicted in this way. Every day his drawer was jammed, and every day in consequence it was something else that rhymes to it. But I pointed out to him that this sense of wrong was really subjective and relative; it rested entirely upon the assumption that the drawer could, should, and would come out easily. "But if," I said, "you picture to yourself that you are pulling against some powerful and oppressive enemy, the struggle will become merely exciting and not exasperating. Imagine that you are tugging up a lifeboat out of the sea. Imagine that you are roping up a fellow-creature out of an Alpine crevasse. Imagine even that you are a boy again and engaged in a tug-of-war between French and English." Shortly after saying this I left him; but I have no doubt at all that my words bore the best possible fruit. I have no doubt that every day of his life he hangs on to the handle of that drawer with a flushed face and eyes bright with battle, uttering encouraging shouts to himself, and seeming to hear all round him the roar of an applauding ring.

So I do not think that it is altogether fanciful or incredible to suppose that even the floods in London may be accepted and enjoyed poetically. Nothing beyond inconvenience seems really to have been caused by them; and inconvenience, as I have said, is only one aspect, and that the most unimaginative and accidental aspect of a really romantic situation. An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered. An inconvenience is only an adventure

wrongly considered. The water that girdled the houses and shops of London must, if anything, have only increased their previous witchery and wonder. For as the Roman Catholic priest in the story said: "Wine is good with everything except water," and on a similar principle, water is good with everything except wine.

## ON MONSTERS

**I** ONCE saw in the newspapers this paragraph, of which I made a note:

### "LEPRECHAUN" CAUGHT

Great excitement has been caused in Mullingar, in the west of Ireland, by the report that the supposed "Leprechaun," which several children stated they had seen at Killough, near Delvin, during the past two months, was captured. Two policemen found a creature of dwarfish proportions in a wood near the town, and brought the little man to Mullingar Workhouse, where he is now an inmate. He eats greedily, but all attempts to interview him have failed, his only reply being a peculiar sound between a growl and a squeal. The inmates regard him with interest mixed with awe.

This seems like the beginning of an important era of research; it seems as if the world of experiments had at last touched the world of reality. It is as if one read: "Great excitement has been caused in Rotten Row, in the west of London, by the fact that the centaur, previously seen by several colonels and young ladies, has at last been stopped in his lawless gallop." Or it is as if one saw in a newspaper: "Slight perturbation has been caused at the west end of Margate by the capture of a mermaid," or "A daring fowler, climbing the crags of the Black Mountains for a nest of eagles, found, somewhat unexpectedly, that it was a nest of angels." It is wonderful to have the calm admission in

cold print of such links between the human world and other worlds. It is interesting to know that they took the Leprechaun to a workhouse. It settles, and settles with a very sound instinct, the claim of humanity in such sublime curiosities. If a centaur were really found in Rotten Row, would they take him to a workhouse or to a stable? If a mermaid were really fished up at Margate, would they take her to a workhouse or to an aquarium? If people caught an angel unawares, would they put the angel in a workhouse or in an aviary?

The idea of the Missing Link was not at all new with Darwin; it was not invented merely by those vague but imaginative minor poets to whom we owe most of our ideas about evolution. Men had always played about with the idea of a possible link between human and bestial life; and the very existence—or, if you will, the very non-existence—of the centaur or the mermaid proves it. All the mythologies had dreamed of a half-human monster. The only objection to the centaur and the mermaid was that they could not be found. In every other respect their merits were of the most solid sort. So it is with the Darwinian ideal of a link between man and the brutes. There is no objection to it except that there is no evidence for it. The only objection to the Missing Link is that he is apparently fabulous, like the centaur and the mermaid, and all the other images under which man has imagined a bridge between himself and brutality. In short, the only objection to the Missing Link is that he is missing.

But there is also another very elementary difference. The Greeks and the medievals invented monstrosities. But they treated them as monstrosities—that is, they treated them as exceptions. They did not deduce any law from such lawless things as the centaur or the merman, the

griffin or the hippogriff. But modern people did try to make a law out of the Missing Link. They made him a lawgiver, though they were hunting for him like a criminal. They built on the foundation of him before he was found. They made this unknown monster, the mixture of the man and ape, the founder of society and the accepted father of mankind. The ancients had a fancy that there was a mongrel of horse and man, a mongrel of fish and man. But they did not make it the father of anything; they did not ask the mad mongrel to breed. The ancients did not draw up a system of ethics based upon the centaur, showing how man in a civilized society must take care of his hands, but must not wholly forget his hooves. They never reminded woman that, although she had the golden hair of a goddess, she had the tail of a fish. But the moderns did talk to man as if he were the Missing Link; they did remind him that he must allow for apish imbecility and bestial tricks. The moderns did tell the woman that she was half a brute, for all her beauty; you can find the thing said again and again in Schopenhauer and other prophets of the modern spirit. That is the real difference between the two monsters. The Missing Link is still missing and so is the merman. On the top of all this we have the Leprechaun, apparently an actual monster at present in the charge of the police. It is unnecessary to say that numbers of learned people have proved again and again that it could not exist. It is equally unnecessary to say that numbers of unlearned people—children, mothers of children, workers, common people who grow corn or catch fish—had seen them existing. Almost every other simple type of our working population had seen a Leprechaun. A fisherman had seen a Leprechaun. A farmer had seen a Leprechaun. Even a postman had probably seen one. But there was one simple son of the



people whose path had never before been crossed by the prodigy. Never until then had a policeman seen a Leprechaun. It was only a question of whether the monster should take the policeman away with him into elfland (where such a policeman as he would certainly have been fettered by the fatal love of the fairy queen), or whether the policeman should take away the monster to the police-station. The forces of this earth prevailed; the constable captured the elf, instead of the elf capturing the constable. The officer took him to the workhouse, and opened a new epoch in the study of tradition and folk-lore.

What will the modern world do if it finds (as very likely it will) that the wildest fables have had a basis in fact; that there are creatures of the borderland, that there are oddities on the fringe of fixed laws, that there are things so unnatural as easily to be called preternatural? I do not know what the modern world will do about these things; I only know what I hope. I hope the modern world will be as sane about these things as the medieval world was about them. Because I believe that an ogre can have two heads, that is no reason why I should lose the only head that I have. Because the medieval man thought that some man had the head of a dog, that was no reason why he himself should have the head of a donkey. The medieval man was never essentially weak or stupid about any of his beliefs, however unfounded they were. He did not lack judgment; he only lacked the opportunities of judgment. He had superstitions; but he was not superstitious about them. He was wrong about Africa; but then, to do him justice, he did not care whether he was right. He had got that particular thing which some modern people call "the love of truth," but which is really simply the power of taking one's own mistakes seriously. He thought that ordinary



men were a serious matter; as they are. He thought that extraordinary men were a fantastic fairy-tale; and he thought (very rightly) that the fairy-tale was all the more fantastic if it was true. He did not let dog-faced men affect his conception of mankind; he regarded them as a joke, the best as a practical joke. But in our time, I am sorry to say, we have seen some signs of the possibility that such aberrations or monstrosities as spiritual science may discover will be taken as real tests of, or keys to, the human lot. For instance, the psychological phenomenon called "dual personality" is certainly a thing so extraordinary that any old-fashioned rationalist or agnostic would simply have called it a miracle and disbelieved it. But nowadays those who do believe it will not treat it as a miracle—that is, as an exception. They try to make deductions from it, theories about identity and metempsychosis and psychical evolution, and God knows what. If it is true that one particular body has two souls, it is a joke, as if it had two noses. It must not be permitted to upset the actualities of our human happiness. If some one says, "Jones blew his nose," and Jones is of so peculiar a formation that one may with logical propriety ask, "Which nose?" that is no reason why the ordinary formula should lose its ordinary human utility. This is, I think, one of the most real dangers that lie in front of the civilization that has just discovered the Leprechaun. We are going to find all the gods and fairies all over again, all the spiritual hybrids and all the jests of eternity. But we are not going to find them, as the pagans found them, in our youth, in an atmosphere in which gods can be jested with or giants slapped on the back. We are going to find them in the old age of our society, in a mood dangerously morbid, in a spirit only too ready to take the exception instead of the rule. If we find creatures

that are half human, we may only too possibly make them an excuse for being half-human ourselves. I should not be very painfully concerned about the Leprechaun if people had thrown stones at him as a bad fairy, or given him milk and fire as a good one. But there is something menacing about taking away a monster in order to study him. There is something sinister about putting a Leprechaun in the workhouse. The only solid comfort is that he certainly will not work.

## WHAT I FOUND IN MY POCKET

ONCE when I was very young I met one of those men who have made the Empire what it is—a man in an astrachan coat, with an astrachan moustache—a tight, black, curly moustache. Whether he put on the moustache with the coat, or whether his Napoleonic will enabled him not only to grow a moustache in the usual place, but also to grow little moustaches all over his clothes, I do not know. I only remember that he said to me the following words: “A man can’t get on nowadays by hanging about with his hands in his pockets.” I made reply with the quite obvious flippancy that perhaps a man got on by having his hands in other people’s pockets. Whereupon he began to argue about Moral Evolution, so I suppose what I said had some truth in it. But the incident now comes back to me, and connects itself with another incident—if you can call it an incident—which happened to me only the other day.

I have only once in my life picked a pocket, and then (perhaps through some absent-mindedness) I picked my own. My act can really with some reason be so described. For in taking things out of my own pocket I had at least one of the more tense and quivering emotions of the thief; I had a complete ignorance and a profound curiosity as to what I should find there. Perhaps it would be the exaggeration of eulogy to call me a tidy person. But I can always pretty satisfactorily account for all my possessions. I can always tell where they are, and what I have done with them, so long as I can keep them out of my pockets. If once

anything slips into those unknown abysses, I wave it a sad, Virgilian farewell. I suppose that the things that I have dropped into my pockets are still there; the same presumption applies to the things that I have dropped into the sea. But I regard the riches stored in both these bottomless chasms with the same reverent ignorance. They tell us that on the last day the sea will give up its dead; and I suppose that on the same occasion long strings and strings of extraordinary things will come running out of my pockets. But I have quite forgotten what any of them are; and there is really nothing (excepting the money) that I shall be at all surprised at finding among them.

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Such at least has hitherto been my state of innocence. I here only wish briefly to call the special, extraordinary, and hitherto unprecedented circumstances which led me in cold blood and, being of sound mind, to turn out my pockets. I was locked up in a third-class carriage for a rather long journey. The time was towards evening, but it might have been anything, for everything resembling earth or sky or light or shade was painted out as if with a great wet brush by an unshifting sheet of quite colourless rain. I had no books or newspapers. I had not even a pencil and a scrap of paper with which to write a religious epic. There were no advertisements on the walls of the carriage, otherwise I could have plunged into the study of them, for any collection of printed words is quite enough to suggest infinite complexities of mental ingenuity. When I find myself opposite the words "Sunlight Soap" I can exhaust all the aspects of Sun Worship, Apollo, and summer poetry before I go on to the less congenial subject of soap. But there was no printed word or picture anywhere; there



was nothing but blank wood inside the carriage and blank wet without. Now I deny most energetically that anything is, or can be, uninteresting. So I stared at the joints of the walls and seats, and began thinking hard on the fascinating subject of wood. Just as I had begun to realize why, perhaps, it was that Christ was a carpenter, rather than a bricklayer, or a baker, or anything else, I suddenly started upright, and remembered my pockets. I was carrying about with me an unknown treasury. I had a British Museum and a South Kensington collection of unknown curios hung all over me in different places. I began to take the things out.

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The first thing I came upon consisted of piles and heaps of Battersea tram tickets. There were enough to equip a paper chase. They shook down in showers like confetti. Primarily, of course, they touched my patriotic emotions, and brought tears to my eyes; also they provided me with the printed matter I required, for I found on the back of them some short but striking little scientific essays about some kind of pill. Comparatively speaking, in my then destitution, those tickets might be regarded as a small but well-chosen scientific library. Should my railway journey continue (which seemed likely at the time) for a few months longer, I could imagine myself throwing myself into the controversial aspects of the pill, composing replies and rejoinders pro and con upon the data furnished to me. But after all it was the symbolic quality of the tickets that moved me most. For as certainly as the Cross of St. George means English patriotism, those scraps of paper meant all that municipal patriotism which is now, perhaps, the greatest hope of England.

The next thing that I took out was a pocket-knife. A pocket-knife, I need hardly say, would require a thick book full of moral meditations all to itself. A knife typifies one of the most primary of those practical origins upon which as upon low, thick pillars all our human civilization reposes. Metals, the mystery of the thing called iron and of the thing called steel, led me off half dazed into a kind of dream. I saw into the entrails of dim, damp woods, where the first man, among all the common stones, found the strange stone. I saw a vague and violent battle, in which stone axes broke and stone knives were splintered against something shining and new in the hand of one desperate man. I heard all the hammers on all the anvils of the earth. I saw all the swords of feudal and all the wheels of industrial war. For the knife is only a short sword; and the pocket-knife is a secret sword. I opened it and looked at that brilliant and terrible tongue which we call a blade; and I thought that perhaps it was the symbol of the oldest of the needs of man. The next moment I knew that I was wrong; for the thing that came next out of my pocket was a box of matches. Then I saw fire, which is stronger even than steel, the old, fierce female thing, the thing we all love, but dare not touch.

The next thing I found was a piece of chalk; and I saw in it all the art and all the frescoes of the world. The next was a coin of a very modest value; and I saw in it not only the image and superscription of our own Caesar, but all government and order since the world began. But I have not space to say what were the items in the long and splendid procession of poetical symbols that came pouring out. I cannot tell you all the things that were in my pocket. I can tell you one thing, however, that I could not find in my pocket. I allude to my railway ticket.



## THE PERFECT GAME

WE have all met the man who says that some odd things have happened to him, but that he does not really believe that they were supernatural. My own position is the opposite of this. I believe in the supernatural as a matter of intellect and reason, not as a matter of personal experience. I do not see ghosts; I only see their inherent probability. But it is entirely a matter of the mere intelligence, not even of the emotions; my nerves and body are altogether of this earth, very earthy. But upon people of this temperament one weird incident will often leave a peculiar impression. And the weirdest circumstance that ever occurred to me occurred a little while ago. It consisted in nothing less than my playing a game, and playing it quite well for some seventeen consecutive minutes. The ghost of my grandfather would have astonished me less.

On one of these blue and burning afternoons I found myself, to my inexpressible astonishment, playing a game called croquet. I had imagined that it belonged to the epoch of Leech and Anthony Trollope, and I had neglected to provide myself with those very long and luxuriant side whiskers which are really essential to such a scene. I played it with a man whom we will call Parkinson, and with whom I had a semi-philosophical argument which lasted through the entire contest. It is deeply implanted in my mind that I had the best of the argument; but it is certain and beyond dispute that I had the worst of the game.

"Oh, Parkinson, Parkinson!" I cried, patting him affectionately on the head with a mallet, "how far you really are from the pure love of the sport—you who can play. It is only we who play badly who love the game itself. You love glory; you love applause; you love the earthquake voice of victory; you do not love croquet. You do not love croquet until you love being beaten at croquet. It is we the bunglers who adore the occupation in the abstract. It is we to whom it is art for art's sake. If we may see the face of Croquet herself (if I may so express myself) we are content to see her face turned upon us in anger. Our play is called amateurish; and we wear proudly the name of amateur, for amateurs is but the French for Lovers. We accept all adventures from our Lady, the most disastrous or the most dreary. We wait outside her iron gates (I allude to the hoops), vainly essaying to enter. Our devoted balls, impetuous and full of chivalry, will not be confined within the pedantic boundaries of the mere croquet ground. Our balls seek honour in the ends of the earth; they turn up in the flower-beds and the conservatory; they are to be found in the front garden and the next street. No, Parkinson! The good painter loves his skill. It is the bad painter who loves his art. The good musician loves being a musician; the bad musician loves music. With such a pure and hopeless passion do I worship croquet. I love the game itself. I love the parallelogram of grass marked out with chalk or tape, as if its limits were the frontiers of my sacred fatherland, the four seas of Britain. I love the mere swing of the mallets, and the click of the balls is music. The four colours are to me sacramental and symbolic, like the red of martyrdom, or the white of Easter Day. You lose all this, my poor Parkinson. You have to solace yourself for the absence of this vision by the paltry

consolation of being able to go through hoops and to hit the stick."

And I waved my mallet in the air with a graceful gaiety.

"Don't be too sorry for me," said Parkinson, with his simple sarcasm. "I shall get over it in time. But it seems to me that the more a man likes a game the better he would want to play it. Suppose the pleasure in the thing itself does come first, doesn't the pleasure of success come naturally and inevitably afterwards? Or, take your own simile of the Knight and his Lady-love. I admit the gentleman does first and foremost want to be in the lady's presence. But I never heard of a gentleman who wanted to look an utter ass when he was there."

"Perhaps not, though he generally looks it," I replied. "But the truth is that there is a fallacy in the simile, although it was my own. The happiness at which the lover is aiming is an infinite happiness, which can be extended without limit. The more he is loved, normally speaking, the jollier he will be. It is definitely true that the stronger the love of both lovers, the stronger will be the happiness. But it is not true that the stronger the play of both croquet players the stronger will be the game. It is logically possible—(follow me closely here, Parkinson!)—it is logically possible, to play croquet too well to enjoy it at all. If you could put this blue ball through that distant hoop as easily as you could pick it up with your hand, then you would not put it through that hoop any more than you pick it up with your hand; it would not be worth doing. If you could play unerringly you would not play at all. The moment the game is perfect the game disappears."

"I do not think, however," said Parkinson, "that you are in any immediate danger of effecting that sort of

destruction. I do not think your croquet will vanish through its own faultless excellence. You are safe for the present."

I again caressed him with the mallet, knocked a ball about, wired myself, and resumed the thread of my discourse.

The long, warm evening had been gradually closing in, and by this time it was almost twilight. By the time I had delivered four more fundamental principles, and my companion had gone through five more hoops, the dusk was verging upon dark.

"We shall have to give this up," said Parkinson, as he missed a ball almost for the first time, "I can't see a thing."

"Nor can I," I answered, "and it is a comfort to reflect that I could not hit anything if I saw it."

With that I struck a ball smartly, and sent it away into the darkness towards where the shadowy figure of Parkinson moved in the hot haze. Parkinson immediately uttered a loud and dramatic cry. The situation, indeed, called for it. I had hit the right ball.

Stunned with astonishment, I crossed the gloomy ground, and hit my ball again. It went through a hoop. I could not see the hoop; but it was the right hoop. I shuddered from head to foot.

Words were wholly inadequate, so I slouched heavily after that impossible ball. Again I hit it away into the night, in what I supposed was the vague direction of the quite invisible stick. And in the dead silence I heard the stick rattle as the ball struck it heavily.

I threw down my mallet. "I can't stand this," I said. "My ball has gone right three times. These things are not of this world."

"Pick your mallet up," said Parkinson, "have another go."

"I tell you I daren't. If I made another hoop like that I should see all the devils dancing there on the blessed grass."

"Why devils?" asked Parkinson; "they may be only fairies making fun of you. They are sending you the 'Perfect Game', which is no game."

I looked about me. The garden was full of a burning darkness, in which the faint glimmers had the look of fire. I stepped across the grass as if it burnt me, picked up the mallet, and hit the ball somewhere—somewhere where another ball might be. I heard the dull click of the balls touching, and ran into the house like one pursued.



## E. V. LUCAS

### PARENTS' BROTHERS

I AM more and more convinced that if a philosopher wished to write a history of human eccentricity or whimsicality he could not do better than confine his investigations to uncles. Fathers, mothers, aunts, grandfathers, grandmothers, cousins, even brothers and sisters, can be strange; but uncles are strangest. If you ask a man if he has any unusual relations, and he at once (as he will) begins to chuckle, you may be certain he is thinking of an uncle, even two uncles, even three. Probe him, and you will find that you were right.

Every uncle has, of course, to be first a brother, but as brothers they do not stand out so remarkably. To their own generation they may be tiresome or even deplorable, but that is all; their nodosities and grotesqueries are fully visible only to the next, to us, their nephews and nieces. None the less, our minds are often prepared to consider them as quaint creatures—the oddness of uncles is often instilled in us before we have begun to observe it for ourselves—by those very brothers and sisters to whom the full pageant is not displayed. At a very early age we hear our parents discussing them. A letter is opened at the breakfast table. “Good heavens! what do you think Hubert has done now?” Or “I wish Gregory wouldn’t be so utterly mad.” Or “Poor Grace! Arthur’s gone off to China again, this time to be a missionary! Why, the man’s a heathen.” Here is food for reflection indeed: Uncle Hubert performing



some unknown and exciting deed; Uncle Gregory not sane; Uncle Arthur a savage with feathers and a bow and arrow! We had not thought of them quite like that, but henceforward we shall have quite new ideas.

I would go so far as to maintain that it is impossible to find people without odd uncles. When comparing uncles at a dinner-party the other evening, some astonishing examples were revealed. One of the company had an uncle who never got up. Although perfectly well, for twenty years he stayed in bed. And then one morning, without giving any notice of his intention, he appeared at the breakfast table and was never abnormal again. Being peculiar about getting up seems to be an avuncular trait. I remember a novelist friend of mine, who was never so amusing as when describing odd people, telling me about an uncle of his whose speciality was turning night into day. When all the world was out and about he was asleep. Directly all the world went to bed he became lively. This was not from necessity, but choice. Whether he had been crossed in love I cannot say, but a blighted heart is only too often the cause that is hinted at when the freakishness of uncles is under discussion. This, perhaps, is one of the reasons why the most freakish of all are usually bachelors, the leavening and levelling influence of a matter-of-fact woman never having been at work.

But, even if their full quality does not emerge until they are widowers, they can be married, too. There was, for instance, the uncle of another member of the company who had been married, and was the father of two daughters. But after the death of his wife he shut himself up in the turret of his house, which was at Streatham when Streatham was more or less in the country, and confined himself to it for ever, as a hermit. He never saw his

daughters again, nor did they see him, although they were all within the same walls. His meals were carried to his doormat, and there deposited. Having eaten them, he retained the plates, dishes and cups, so that new ones had continually to be bought. At his death thousands of pieces of crockery were recovered.

Even though it is no hindrance to oddity in an uncle to be married, as a father he is probably less susceptible to criticism and laughter. It is not his own children, but his brother's or sister's children, who will get the real fun out of him. Fathers are tragic figures; uncles comic. Yet uncles are to the young naturally so fascinating a study not a little because they are our parents' kith and kin. There is the interest of comparing brother with brother, or brother with sister, to detect dissimilarities and resemblances. There is the interest of finding some one whose attitude to a rather terrifying progenitor exhibits no fear whatever and, indeed, often becomes so familiar that the little spectators tremble. There is the problem of how to get on to terms with this boisterous or this serious man—for all uncles are one or the other: how to parry facetiousness or avoid a too sympathetic desire to be friendly.

Meanwhile, sitting round the table, we continued to call uncles from the deep, including still another who would not get up. For months he kept his bed, living entirely on biscuits and a shrewish form of yellow condiment called piccalilli, which he ate from a soup-plate. Then one day he would rise, order his carriage, and, in his dressing-gown, drive forth. At every pastry-cook's he would stop the brougham, rush in, bite a piece out of half a dozen tarts made of different jams, and dash back; leaving to the footman the task of explaining and paying for the damage done. Here perhaps a hint of something more than eccentricity

might be suspected, but no one can so adroitly balance on the rail dividing sanity from insanity as uncles. Another uncle had his hair curled by a barber every morning of his life. Another uncle had been murdered by a tramp. But that is nothing: this is not an inquiry into the rights and wrongs of tramps.

Christmas is to a large extent the uncles' festival. We are in the habit of saying that it is the children's; but the success or failure of the anniversary is often a matter for uncles to decide. It is their principal chance in the year to show what they are made of. Let them speak now or forever hold their peace, and let them say it with gifts. It is also at Christmas that the visibility of uncles becomes as nearly perfect as may be. For the other 364 days they are largely a matter of hearsay. Rumours of their peculiarities reach us, but no more. It is on Christmas Day that their countenances, homely, gothic, provocative of mirth, are again actually before us.

## A DOOR-PLATE

**B**UT for having lived in London long enough to know the rules, or, in other words, to be aware that nothing is out of place there, I should have thought the door-plate which, in Fetter Lane, suddenly caught my eye an incongruity. But no; I am inured, and therefore I merely looked at it twice instead of only once, and passed on with a head full of mental and intensely uncivic pictures of undaunted men, identical in patience and hopefulness, standing hour after hour at the ends of piers all round our coasts, watching their lines. For the words on the door-plate were these: "British Sea Anglers' Society."

I shall continue to deny that the notice was out of place, but a certain oddity (not uncommon in London) may be conceded, for Fetter Lane otherwise has less marine association than any street that one could name; and angling is too placid, too philosophic, too reclusive, a sport to be represented by an office absolutely on the fringe of that half-square mile of the largest city in the world given over to fierce, feverish activity; where printing presses are at their thickest, busy and clattering, day and night, in the task of providing this nation with all—and a little more—of the news, and a fresh sensation for every breakfast table. Except that upon the breakfast table is often to be found the herring in one or other of its posthumous metamorphoses, there is no connecting link whatever. And why one has to belong to a society with a door-plate in Fetter Lane before drawing mackerel from Pevensy Bay, or whiting from the Solent, is a question to answer which is



beside the mark; although that fish can be caught from the sea without membership of this fraternity I myself can testify—for was I not once in the English Channel in a small boat in the company of two conger eels and a dogfish, whose noisy and acrobatic reluctance to die turned what ought to have been a party of pleasure into misery and shame; and shall I ever forget the look of dismay (a little touched by triumph) on the face of a humane English girl visiting Ireland, when, after she had pulled in an unresisting pollock at the end of a trawl line and the boatman had taken it from the hook and beaten it sickeningly to death with an iron thole pin, she heard him say, as, later, he handed the fish to a colleague on the landing-stage, "The young lady killed it"?

But this is not London—far, indeed, from it!—although an excellent example of London's peculiar and precious gift of starting the mind on extra-mural adventures. The sea, however, is, in reality too, very near the city, and the closeness of London's relations with it can be tested in many delightful ways. Although, for example, the natural meeting-place of those two old cronies, Father Thames and Neptune, is somewhere about Gravesend, Neptune, as a matter of fact, comes for a friendly glass with Gog (I almost wrote Grog) and Magog right up to town. If you lean over the eastern parapet of London Bridge (just under the clock which has letters instead of numerals) you will see the stevedores unloading all kinds of wonderful sea-borne exotic merchandise. The other morning I was the guest of a skipper of one of these vessels, and sat in his cabin (which smelt authentically of tobacco smoke, as only a cabin can) with his first engineer, and ate ship's biscuits, and heard first-hand stories of the sinking of the *Titanic*, together with details of a romance in the European quarter

of a certain African port all ready to the magic hand of Mr. Conrad. Twelve minutes later I was in a club in Pall Mall!

But there is no need to enter a cabin, although that is, of course, the pleasantest way, and I am sure Captain Potter (as we will call him) would be glad to see you; for if you wander down to the Tower you can sit on an old cannon on the quay and have the music of cordage in your ears, and if you climb to the top of the Tower Bridge the scene below you has the elements of a thousand yarns. And there are streets near the docks which might have been cut out of Plymouth or Bristol. Now and then, indeed, London may be said to be actually on the sea.

Such excursions are for the hours of light. In the hours of darkness I used to have, before the War, a favourite river-side refuge. At that far-off time, when public-houses remained open until half-past 12 a.m., I had for fine summer nights, after a dull play or dinner, a diversion that never failed; and this was to make my way—if possible with a stranger to such sights and scenes, and an impressionable one—to the Angel at Rotherhithe and watch the shipping for an hour. The Angel was difficult of access, but once there you might be at Valparaiso. It was a quarter of a mile below the Tower Bridge on the south bank, with a wooden balcony overhanging the water, and a mass of dark creaking barges moored below. Here on the balcony we used to sit, while the great ships stole by at quarter speed, groping for their moorings, and strange lights appeared and disappeared, and voices hailed each other and were answered, and little sinister rowing boats moved here and there on unknown missions, and perhaps an excursion steamer, back very late from Margate, with its saloon all lighted and a banjo bravely making merry to the bitter end, would glide



past towards London Bridge; and such is the enchantment of ships and shipping that not even she could break the spell.

I hope that the Angel has survived. If not, I must carry out the dream of my life and make friends with the captain of a Thames tug.

## A VISIT TO NICOTINA HOUSE

**I**T may not be generally known that there has recently been added to the educational establishments of England a refined school for the daughters of gentlefolk where the art of smoking plays an important part in the curriculum. In view of the requirements of a modern girl "coming out" and entering Society, it was felt that instruction in the nice conduct of a cigarette was essential; hence the emphasis laid upon it in this most up-to-date institution. Regard is paid also to other branches of learning, such as cards and dancing, but very properly a knowledge of tobacco comes first.

"You see," said Miss Virginia Weed, the charming and energetic head mistress, "we realized that a girl who is a tyro at smoking stands very little chance to-day. She would be laughed at as a peasant or, even worse, receive the cold shoulder as a Puritan or prig. And that would be terrible."

"Terrible," I said.

"There is also a practical or, if you will, a mercenary, side to it," she added. "You must have noticed the new tendency of tobacco manufacturers to enlist the services of pretty young women in the advertisement of their wares?"

I said that, all unobservant as I was, this development had not escaped me.

"You may also be aware," Miss Weed continued, "that considerable sums of money are disbursed to those who are willing to say in print that they prefer this or that brand to all others."

I said that I had not supposed that such recommendations were gratuitous, giving anything for nothing having become as obsolete as old-fashioned femininity.

"Well," said Miss Weed, "you will agree that a girl should be prepared for all the honourable avenues that lead to pin-money. That, at any rate, is what we feel here, and that is one reason why smoking is taught as carefully, if not more so, than such acquirements as can be picked up, so to speak, as one runs, such as the three R's."

"You have no classes in tea-making?" I inquired.

"Certainly not," she replied.

"Nor in any domestic accomplishment?"

"We teach making-up, of course."

"And the piano?" I asked.

"Oh, no. That has completely gone out. But we have lessons in radio and changing gramophone-needles."

I congratulated her on such thoroughness, and she seemed pleased.

"And manners?" I said. "You pay, I suppose, little or no attention to this unimportant subject?"

"As little as possible," she replied. "This is essentially a modern school, and we want to fit our scholars for the world as it is to-day. But I am sure you would like to see something of our methods in action. This, for example"—opening a door—"is where the youngest pupils are trained."

We entered a large room where a number of girls were lolling about on sofas and in very deep arm-chairs, with cigarettes in their hands or mouths. Noticing that they looked far from happy, I said so.

"That is true," said Miss Weed. "But they will be, in time. These, you see, are beginners, and at first there are

discomforts. We start them on the mildest tobacco obtainable and let them advance by very slow degrees. In fact we begin with a blend of something absolutely innocuous, with only a little of the true leaf. Many girls, of course, like it and therefore never use this room at all. Others acquire the art only with suffering. But why not? Art that comes too easily is rarely admirable. Moreover, what they are learning in suffering they will teach in puffs."

"But supposing," I said, "that a girl is incorrigible; that—like that poor creature who just bolted for the door—she shows no aptitude for this accomplishment?"

"Often," said Miss Weed, "she is expelled."

"Expelled!" I exclaimed.

"Perhaps the word is rather strong," said Miss Weed. "Her parents are asked to remove her. But such cases are very few. We have not had more than two in a year; and, as nicotine gets more and more into the blood of the nation, there will be fewer."

"And do you find much need to punish?" I asked.

"Very little," said Miss Weed. "They are good girls. The gravest fault is secret non-smoking. Sometimes one of them is caught slipping away into the garden so as to get a little fresh air. We have to be watchful of that and to reprimand accordingly. And we are strict too about cigarette-cases and match-boxes. There is an inspection every morning, and should these not be properly filled and ready for the day, the culprit is dealt with. But we are, I assure you," and Miss Weed laughed brightly, "a very happy family."

I was then shown the room where the tests were applied. The girls, being given cigarettes of different tobacco, Turkish, Egyptian and American, and sub-varieties of these,

were asked to state which was which. Some, even among the little ones, displayed extraordinary discrimination.

"And now," said Miss Weed, "I will show you some of the proficient smokers at their daily avocations." She led the way from one room to another, where all the pupils had cigarettes either between their lips or in holders, irrespective of their occupation. Miss Weed proudly drew my attention to this masterly disregard of whether or not the smoke got in their eyes or where the ash fell.

"Of course you allow them to smoke during meals?" I asked.

"Of course," said Miss Weed. "It is in fact compulsory."

## THE LORD OF LIFE

"What right has that man to have a spaniel?" said a witty lady, pointing to a bully: "spaniels should be a reward."

**I**N his prescription for the perfect home Southey included a little girl rising six years and a kitten rising six weeks. That is perhaps the prettiest thing that ever found its way from his pen—that patient, plodding, bread-winning pen, which he drove with such pathetic industry as long as he had any power left with which to urge it forward. A little girl rising six years and a kitten rising six weeks. Charming, isn't it?

But, my dear rascally Lake Poet, what about a puppy rising six months? How did you come to forget that?—such a puppy as is in this room as I write: a small black puppy of the Cocker spaniel blood, so black that had the good God not given him a gleaming white corner to his wicked little eye, one would not know at dinner whether he was sitting by one's side or not—not, that is, until his piercing shrieks, signifying that he had been (very properly) trodden on again, rent the welkin.

This puppy have I called the Lord of Life because I cannot conceive of a more complete embodiment of vitality, curiosity, success, and tyranny. Vitality first and foremost. It is incredible that so much pulsating quicksilver, so much energy and purpose, should be packed into a foot and a half of black hide. He is up earliest in the morning, he retires last at night. He sleeps in the day, it is true, but it is sleep that hangs by a thread. Let there be a footfall out of place, let a strange dog in the street venture but to



breathe a little louder than usual, let the least rattle of plates strike upon his ear, and somnolence drops from him in an instant. From an older dog one expects some of this watchfulness. For an absurd creature of four months with one foot still in the cradle to be so charged with vigilance is too ridiculous.

If nothing occurs to interest him, and his eyes are no longer heavy (heavy! he never had heavy eyes), he will make drama for himself. He will lay a slipper at your feet and bark for it to be thrown. I admire him most when he is returning with it in his mouth. The burden gives him responsibility: his four black feet, much too big for his body, all move at once with a new importance and rhythm. When he runs for the slipper he is just so much galvanized puppy rioting with life; when he returns he is an official, a guardian, a trustee: his eye is grave and responsible; the conscientious field spaniel wakes in him and asserts itself.

As to his curiosity, it knows no bounds. He has to be acquainted with all that happens. What kind of a view of human life a dog, even a big dog, acquires, I have sometimes tried to imagine by kneeling or lying full length on the ground and looking up. The world then becomes strangely incomplete: one sees little but legs. Of course the human eye is set differently in the head, and a dog can visualize humanity without injuring his neck as I must do in that grovelling posture; but none the less the dog's view of his master standing over him must be very partial, very fragmentary. Yet this little puppy, although his eyes are within eight inches of the ground, gives the impression that he sees all. He goes through the house with a microscope.

But for his dependence, his curiosity, and his proprietary instinct to be studied at their best, you should see him

In an empty house. All dogs like to explore empty houses with their masters, but none more than he. His paws never so resound as when they patter over the bare boards of an empty house. He enters each room with the eye of a builder, tenant, auctioneer, furnisher and decorator in one. I never saw such comprehensive glances, such a nose for a colour scheme. But leave him by accident behind a closed door and see what happens. Not the mandrake torn bleeding from its earth ever shrieked with more melancholy. But tears are instant with him always, in spite of his native cheerfulness. It was surely a puppy that inspired the proverb about crying before you are hurt.

I spoke of his success. That is perhaps his most signal characteristic, for the world is at his feet. Whether indoors or out he has his own way, instantly follows his own inclination. It is one of his most charming traits that he thinks visibly. I often watch him thinking. "Surely it's time tea was brought," I can positively see him saying to himself. "I hope that cake wasn't finished yesterday: it was rather more decent than usual. I believe those girls eat it in the kitchen." Or, "He's putting on his heavy boots"—I am He—"that means the hill. Good! I'll get near the door so as to be sure of slipping out with Him." Or, "It's no good: He's not going for a walk this morning. That stupid old desk again, I suppose." Or, "Who was that? Oh, only the postman. I shan't bark for him." Or, "I'm getting awfully hungry. I'll go and worry the cook."

In what way a dog expresses these thoughts I have no guess (it is one of the leading counts in the indictment of science that it knows nothing about dogs and does not try to learn); but one can see the words passing in procession through his little mind as clearly as if it were made of glass.

But the most visible token of his success is the attention, the homage, he receives from strangers. For he not only dominates the house, but he has a procession of admirers after him in the streets. Little girls and middle-aged ladies equally ask permission to pat him. Old gentlemen (the villains!) ask if he is for sale, and inquire his price. Not that he looks valuable—as a matter of fact, though pure, he is not remarkable—but that he suggests so much companionship and fun. One recognizes instantly the Vital Spark.

When it comes to the consideration of his tyranny, there enter a heavy spaniel named Bush and a capricious Persian egoist in blue-grey fur whom we will call Smoke. Smoke once had a short way with dogs; but the Lord of Life has changed all that. Smoke once would draw back a paw of velvet, dart it forward like the tongue of a serpent and return to sleep again, perfectly secure in her mind that that particular dog would harass her no more. But do you think she ever hurt the puppy in that way? Never. He loafs into the room with his hands in his pockets and his head full of mischief, perceives a long bushy blue-grey tail hanging over the edge of the sofa, and forthwith gives it such a pull with his teeth as a Siberian householder who had been out late and had lost his latch-key might at his door-bell when the wolves were after him. An ordinary dog would be blinded for less; but not so our friend. Smoke merely squeaks reproach, and in a minute or two, when the puppy has tired a little of the game, he is found not only lying beside her and stealing her warmth, but lying in the very centre of the nest in the cushion that she had fashioned for herself. Tyranny, if you like!

And Bush? Poor Bush. For every spoiled new-comer there is, I suppose, throughout life an old faithful friend

who finds himself on the shelf. It is not quite so bad as this with Bush, and when the puppy grows up and is staid too, Bush will return to his own again; but I must admit that at the beginning he had a very hard time of it. For the puppy, chiefly by hanging on his ear, first infuriated him into sulks, and then, his mastery being recognized, set to work systematically to tease and bully him. The result is that now Bush actually has to ask permission before he dares to take up his old seat by my chair; he may have it only if the puppy does not want it.

Bush, I ought to say, has lately been tried by a succession of new dogs; and although the present puppy is his most powerful super-dog, he allowed all to acquire an improper influence and knuckled under with deplorable tameness. The first interloper was an Aberdeen, who taught him to rove. Before that he had never left the garden alone; now he began to absent himself for hours, sometimes whole nights. It was all Scottie's doing, one could see. That small but insidious creature was of original sin compact—was everything that Bush was not. Scottie was unwilling, disobedient, independent, impenitent. When we went out for a walk he started with me punctually enough; but he returned alone. At what point he disappeared, I never knew. He dissolved.

At night—for their kennels adjoined—he sapped Bush's character.

"Directly we are let loose, to-morrow," he would say, "let's go up to the Common and hunt."

"No," said Bush; "they wouldn't like it. *He* wouldn't like it."

"Oh, never mind Him," said Scottie. "After all, what does it mean? Only a whack or two, and it's all over."

"But we shall be tied up all day."



"No, you won't. Just keep on barking and whining, and they'll let you loose in self-defence."

(He knew what he was talking about here, for on one cold night he won his way back into the house entirely by this device. The little blackguard!)

After a while Bush consented.

I had proof one night of the ascendancy which Scottie (aged ten months) had obtained over Bush (aged five years). I chained them up and went for some water. When I returned, Scottie was in Bush's large kennel, where he had no right; but it was warmer. "Come out," I said. But instead of coming out, Scottie whispered threateningly to Bush: "*You* go"; and out crawled the spaniel and abjectedly began to squeeze his shoulders into Scottie's minute abode.

I should not be surprised if these conversations are not minutely true to life; but one can, of course, never know: not at any rate until one meets Cerberus on the banks of the Styx—as we all must—and puts a few leading questions to him as to dog nature, while waiting for the ferry.

But Bush is not my theme; Bush was never a Lord of Life: his pulse was always a little slow, his nature a little too much inclined to accept rather than initiate. Nor, I suppose, will our Lord of Life be quite such a Lord much longer, for with age will come an increase of sobriety, a diminution of joy. That he will not untimely fall by the way, but will grow up to serious spanielhood, I feel as sure as if an angel had forewarned me; but were he now to die this should be his epitaph: "Here lies a Lord of Life, aged four months. He would never be broken to the house, but was adorable after sin."



“R. C.”

THE letters at the head of this essay do not refer to any Royal College, or to that deft and delightful draughtsman, Randolph Caldecott, or to the comforting form of religion dispensed by the Pope. They were copied from a Continental Bradshaw, where you find them or not, according as to whether or not a train has a Restaurant Car attached to it. They stand for Restaurant Cars, those structures of brown wood and plate-glass which trains in Europe mysteriously pick up and attach to themselves at odd places *en route*, and again, their mission of more or less nourishing the traveller fulfilled, as mysteriously shed.

To Americans I suppose it is nothing to eat at a table on a train. But in England there are still millions of people who have never in their own country partaken of food on railway journeys except from nose-bags, and have never crossed the Channel. There are also a certain number, both English and Americans, who know the European Restaurant Car intimately, and deem the time spent within it the best part of the journey; and there are those who detest it. Of the latter am I.

When the indictment of the Wagon-lit Restaurant Cars comes to be drawn up, I shall be able to assist very materially. To begin with, there is that offensive autocracy on the part of the attendant which determines where you are to sit, a matter that is much to you and nothing to him, and yet upon which he is absolute and uncompromising. Never has any one yet, taking a seat independently, been

permitted to retain it. Secondly, there is the considerable item of ventilation, no middle way being possible between the two extremes of suffocating heat and a draught that may leave a hundred bitter legacies. I say nothing of the discomforts caused by the oscillation of the train, by reason of which your neighbour's lap gets your wine, for that obviously is less the fault of the wagon-lit than of the track-layer; nor is it exactly the car's fault that the people who sit opposite you are not only always profoundly and minutely anti-pathetic, but are so secretive with the salt.

We pass on then to more personal charges, such as the wine, which is usually bad and very dear; and the utensils, which those who know may be seen polishing afresh with their napkins (so that it has become a sign of much travel when a man does this); and thus we reach the meal itself. Here again the caprice of the attendants is more marked, a certain type of man always having a full selection of *hors d'œuvres* set before him, including butter, while another group, of which I am a birth-right member, is put off with only one or at most two varieties, and those unpalatable. I have spent more pains to get the butter in a Restaurant Car than other men in acquiring virtue; but enough indigestible radishes have surrounded me to sustain Mr. Bernard Shaw's remarkable genius for a week, and enough tessellated sausage to pave a bathroom. With the rest of the meal it is the same—not only do I dislike the food, but others get more than I. Some travellers who seem to possess many of the stigmata of the gentleman are able even to ask for a second helping. That these men fill me with a kind of perverted admiration I will not deny, but I cannot imitate them. I cannot interrupt a wagon-lit waiter in what seems to be as much a natural and irresistible

process as the onrush of water at Niagara. I have not that courage, that self-assertiveness. Nor do I care enough.

And then the delays between the courses; the injustices of the distribution, by which the same table again and again gets the first chance at the new dish; the strain of the noise of it all, aggravated by the anxiety that one feels when a waiter lurches along balancing a thousand plates at once—such are a few only of the damaging criticisms which I am prepared to bring against the Restaurant Car.

But (such is the sharpness of the serpent's tooth) do you suppose for an instant that any single one of these charges would be endorsed by the small person of comparatively tender years, now at school, whom it is my quaint fortune to call daughter and have to clothe and support? Not one. Anything less filial than she would become if she were asked to back me in the matter could not be imagined. For to her the Wagon-lit Restaurant Car is the true earthly paradise, and travel on the Continent merely a means of gratifying her passion for eating on trains. Her expression of joy on taking what in such places they call a seat, a stubborn, resisting, struggling thing which has to be held down by main force before you can occupy it, is amazing. Her happy excitement on reading the menu and finding the same tiresome dishes is incredible. Her delight in every moment of the meal is my despair. But no reverses can change her, and if she asks how long does it take to get from Paris to Rome, and after working out the journey with infinite trouble I tell her, it is only that she may compute the number of wagon-lit lunches and dinners which will fall to her ecstatic lot. She even likes the monumental ice-pudding; she even likes her neighbours.

As a fond father, I say, then, let the Restaurant Cars go on. But for myself, in future, when I am alone, I shall

again provide myself with the basket from the buffet which contains half a chicken and half a bottle of Bordeaux and a tiny corkscrew and an apple or a pear and bread and butter and a piece of Gruyère and a paper napkin, and eat it in seclusion in a compartment which the other people have left in order that they may avoid each other's eyes, and be balked of sufficient nourishment, amid all the clatter and nervousness of the Restaurant Car.

## INSIDE THE MENDIPS

**O** BADIAH'S theory as to the size of a cave party—fifty at a time—is completely disregarded at Cheddar, where, on the day on which I was there, we went in in our hundreds. Such gregariousness is, of course, wrong: caves should be difficult of access, attended by mystery, if not danger, and the adventure should be made alone, or in very small numbers, each member of the party bearing a candle or torch. The element of the unexpected should play no mean part. There certainly should not be a turnstile, an electric light, a lecturer. No sooner are these appendages of civilization supplied than romance vanishes, and one might as well be in the Twopenny Tube (although when, forty years ago, the Twopenny Tube was in the making, and one night I was swung high up over Piccadilly Circus in an iron bucket and then down a shaft to the tunnel in the blue clay, there was the sense of peril, too). None the less, the lure of the cave is such that without any of the essentials which I have been enumerating we are still eager to enter one, even though exploration has long been exhausted, and the undertaking takes a long while, and the hole in the cliff, as at Cheddar, is cold and damp and slippery and ill ventilated and lighted by bulbs, and there is a constant commentary in progress.

The lure of the cave clearly must be very powerful or I should not have been there. The day outside was fine and warm, the cave was sinister and chill, with notices against making it rather less dismal by the lenitive of tobacco smoke posted all over the place; and yet we pressed in,



each paying a shilling for the privilege, and a tip to the guide as well. Nor were we by any means all archæologists or geologists—unless, of course, that kind of student has taken to fancy dress. Most of us wore coloured hats, and a few of us bonnets, and some of us said “Lal how much farther?” and others of us said, “Ain’t them stalactites lovely?” The ordinary male humorists asked the guide if this was where the cheese came from, while the more exotic variety, with their girls on their arms, whispered—but just loudly enough to taste public appreciation—inquiries as to their attraction as cave men.

Meanwhile, the guide was talking, too. Pointing to a certain formation, “It will put you in the mind of the fins of a fish,” he said. That was to the first section of our procession, with whom I was grouped. Before I could escape I had heard him say this to seven or eight sections more, as they came in the queue within his range: “It will put you in the mind of the fins of a fish.” I wonder how soon I shall succeed in forgetting that odd phrase. This informative West Countryman seemed, in spite of the staleness of his task, genuinely to appreciate the strange handiwork of God as displayed in this tortuous cavern, but never more so than when he was able to show us how the stalactites hanging from the roof can, in reflection in water, resemble a Swiss village, with church spire and cemetery complete. And when one comes to think of it, perhaps the last place in which one would seek for a replica of a Swiss village would be in a small pool in a rock inside a cave in the heart of the Mendip Hills.

Having no figures, I cannot, of course, compute what kind of a gold mine an old watercourse like this can be; but if shillings are taken for many days of the year at the rate on which they were being taken on my day, the owners

should be enormously wealthy, finding ample compensation there for the loss to this locality of its monopoly of Cheddar cheese, which now, I am told, is made as freely elsewhere as there. A noble substance, a glorious victual (when good), no matter where it is fashioned, to-day you may get it everywhere, and I had some of the very best at Devizes on my way to the caves; but in 1635 Lord Poulett told his friend Lord Conway that the delicacy was in such demand among those who knew it that every Cheddar cheese was bespoke before it was made.

Reverting to cave men, I should say that one of incredible antiquity—his age is put by authorities variously at twenty-five to forty thousand years—is to be seen in a glass case at the entrance. A photograph of him is before me as I write, his head resting all among his bones. His height is computed to have been about five feet and a quarter, his forehead recedes, and his jaw bone is much stronger and bigger than any we see now except at the movies when an American business magnate is talking on the telephone. This early inhabitant of Cheddar was discovered between two layers of stalagmite when, in 1903, the late Mr. Gough, a more recent inhabitant of the place, but also prehistoric in appearance, was excavating at the mouth of the cave which bears his name.

Mr. Gough's photograph also lies before me as I write—a benignant patriarch with long white hair and beard, not unlike a mixture of Walt Whitman, Longfellow, and Buffalo Bill, with one of his poems printed beside it. Entitled "A Meditation on my beholding the Cheddar Cliffs," it reveals the author in adoration of the sublimity of the Gorge. The verses are crude, but their spirit is authentic, and they impel the reader to wish for further opportunities to understand this most remarkable scene. To ascend the

winding road in a motor-car, among other trippers, is ridiculous; one should roam about Cheddar on foot, in the early morning and in the late evening, when it reverts to Nature. I can remember nothing in England so unexpected and massive and impressive as this Gorge. It reminds one now of the Lakes, now of Scotland, and yet is peculiar in character: the most foreign thing, not only in the West Countree, but in the whole island.

Ever since I went to Cheddar and became vocal about it, people have been saying to me, "Oh, but you should see Wookey!"

"Wookey?"

"Yes. Wookey Hole. It's another Somerset cave, but much better. Close to Wells. The name is unworthy, I admit, but it's a wonderful place"; and being, as I have explained, always sensitive to cave-fascination, to Wookey I wended my way, with a pause at Wells, in whose cathedral I watched a large party of "char-a-bangers" being shown the beauties of the interior by the most knowledgeable or most articulate of them; and such was his enthusiasm for his task that he had forgotten to remove his bowler hat. How he could have done so I wondered; how the customary reaction at the cathedral's door could have failed him, and again, having failed him, how none of his earnest audience reminded him of the lapse. Or could he be a really conforming Quaker, with George Fox's contempt for "steeple-houses" large or small active within him? There came back to me one of my earliest and most vivid recollections—of the great lion head of John Bright covered with a massive topper in a corner seat of the Friends' Meeting House at Brighton.

Wookey has a distinction that is absent from Cheddar. It has style. You find the cave, not beside the highway

with people waiting to enter, crowded like sheep, but at the end of a discreet path through a glen, with harts-tongue ferns and moist herbage on one side, and on the other the rushing tide of the river which rises in the cliffs, indigo and urgent. At the end of this path is the opening, marked anomalously, as at Cheddar, by a turnstile. Again I thought how odd is a turnstile across the entrance of a prehistoric cavern which once lodged hyenas and other exotic wild beasts. Those were the days—twenty thousand years ago, says the leaflet—when England was joined to the Continent; now it is an island, with no indigenous creature more formidable than a badger—and turnstiles!

I don't think there is anything to choose between the guides of Wookey and Cheddar; but at Wookey there is more for them to talk about. Cheddar's caves are tunnels—very strange, and now and then made beautiful by stalactites, but tunnels none the less, and very stuffy tunnels, too. Wookey Hole is romantic and unexpected, having its three large rooms and its river broadening into an expanse of water on which a boat can be rowed. One has often rowed into caverns in the rocks on the edge of oceans—the Cornish coast has many—but I have never before stood beside a subterranean stream, and never before have I been so unmistakably at the birth of any river. Usually when you endeavour to trace a river to its beginnings you have a choice of sources. This is certainly the case with the Thames. But there is no such nonsense about the Axe; for at the farthest pool in Wookey Hole you may say with confidence that here the Axe begins. It has not a very long way to go before it reaches the Bristol Channel at Weston Bay, but the way is a good one.

Both at Cheddar and Wookey the guides are incapable



of resisting the lure of similitude. Neither of them can look upon stalactites purely for stalactites' sake; they must resemble something else to get their complete homage. Thus while at Cheddar you are shown (as I said) stalactites which, inverted by reflection in water, are like a Swiss village, at Wookey your attention is drawn to stalagmites that might, by the very lenient, be thought to look like the legendary witch who inhabited the cave, and her dog, now turned to stone.

Excavators are still busy from time to time with Wookey's interior, and a new upstairs chamber, gay and lustrous with stalactites, has recently been opened, where the guide is plunged into high spirits by the musical note, as of a silver bell, which one of the deposits gives forth. Perhaps new bones will be found, together with tokens of primitive man, to swell the collection in the Wells Museum, which already is large enough to prove that Somerset and the Mendips were a centre of prehistoric activity. As for the witch, she was of far later date, and is still believed in. In fact, such are the strange and terrifying sounds emerging from the cave at night that no villager could (I was told) be found to visit the place after dark.

I shall remember Wookey (what a name!) also for the bowling-green which the paper-makers have prepared for their workmen. A bowling-green has always an attraction for me, and I could watch even indifferent performers for hour after hour. There was no one playing the other day—they were all busy inside, converting into paper whatever paper is made of, which I understand is everything but rags—but it was easy to people the turf with grave yet excitable West Countrymen; and I was the more pleased because it was not so very long ago that I found myself in a French



town where a *bouliste* congress was in progress, and I was glad to be reminded of it.

*Boules* and bowls are very different games and yet they are closely akin, too. The French contestants, who came in little bodies from various clubs within a radius of fifty miles, and were welcomed by the *maire* and feasted, and who marched continually in procession with bands, were divided into those who manipulated the *boule de fer* and those addicted to the *boule de bois*. But neither had anything but gravel to bowl upon, and both were at the mercy of any stone or depression in the ground. How the Frenchmen would gape at our perfect lawns! How the Englishmen would sneer at those non-level and therefore non-scientific surfaces! And yet both games are good, and the accuracy, in the iron variety, of the sharpshooters who fling the *boule* into the air so that it drops on to the enemy's best and dislodges it, is often uncanny, and certainly as thrilling, although an agony less prolonged to watch, as the final curve of a conquering wood on the shaven turf.

The programme and my ticket of admission (carrying with it the chance of a prize in the lottery) are here, on the table: *Fédération Bouliste de l'Atlantique*, at Niort. Thirty-eight clubs took part, and, leaving Wookey, again I saw, in the mind's eye, little companies of contestants, on their way to their hotels, with their *boules* in leather cases in their left hands, explaining to each other, with their right, exactly how it was that they lost. Ruddy, black-moustached, deep-voiced men.

## ROBERT LYND

### THE MILITANT RAMBLER

**A**N idealist has written a letter to a morning paper, urging an intensification of the propaganda against litter on the eve of Bank Holidays. He also appeals to the B.B.C. to announce, as soon as a Bank Holiday is over, the names of the various places where paper and rubbish have been left by holiday-makers. "This," he believes, "would probably 'touch' the consciences of the guilty."

This, I think, is one of the most attractive proposals that have been made in the course of the anti-litter campaign. It is attractive not because of the results it may be expected to produce, but because of the faith in human nature which it demonstrates. I would give a great deal to be able to believe that the ordinary litter-thrower is a man with a conscience so sensitive that he would blench on hearing it announced from his loud-speaker that the sandwich-wrapping which he had carelessly thrown away in a field near Neasden had been discovered. But I cannot believe it. Besides, there would be such a cornucopia of litter strewn in the most thickly frequented beauty-spots that the individual litter-thrower would feel that his own sin was scarcely noticeable in the composite sin of the multitude. Suppose, for example, that a man threw away the core of an apple on Box Hill on a Bank Holiday. Would he turn pale with a sense of guilt discovered when the B.B.C. announcer made it known the next day that a

thousand and fifty-nine pieces of newspaper, four hundred and eighty-three squares of brown paper, six thousand seven hundred and five scraps of orange peel, nine empty mobiloil tins, an old boot, twelve beer bottles, twelve hundred and two chocolate wrappings, eighty-one chicken bones, three burst balloons, one apple-core, and seven hundred and nineteen empty cigarette packets were reported to have been discovered on and under Box Hill after the holiday? Would he not feel that his apple core was an inconspicuous trifle amid so monstrous a mass of rubbish? His indignation, it seems to me, would be directed against the other people who had destroyed the amenities of Box Hill with their mountains of litter, not against himself.

At the same time, if it were possible, it would be an excellent thing, after every Bank Holiday, to publish the statistics of litter-throwing and of its geographical distribution. The imagination of the public might be struck if it were announced that the paper and rubbish thrown away in Sussex alone in a single day would, if brought into the same place, form a heap two and a half times as large as Chanctonbury Hill. Unfortunately, if the B.B.C. attempted to publish a complete account of all the litter thrown away by the public on a Bank Holiday, another Bank Holiday would have come round long before the catalogue of the rubbish was complete. And how monotonous it would become. "Under a chestnut-tree near Friday Street, a petrol tin was left behind by a motorist on Easter Sunday." "A sardine tin containing oil and the mutilated tail of a sardine was discovered in the Birdless Grove at Goodwood on Monday, the 4th of August." Who could go on day after day listening to the tale of discarded rubbish? The B.B.C. almost drove us insane during the General Strike

with announcements of the hours of departure of railway-trains. But I would rather listen to a B.B.C. announcer reading aloud a Bradshaw of railway-trains than a Bradshaw of rubbish.

Possibly, the scheme might be more effective if, instead of merely giving a description of the rubbish deposited, the name and address of the litter-thrower were made part of the announcement. I should myself feel uneasy if I heard the news being broadcast to the nation that I had been seen throwing the shell of a hard-boiled egg on to the grass of the river-bank near Shillingford Bridge. The B.B.C. would, in such circumstances, have to be exceedingly careful to verify the names of the litter-throwers reported to it. It would never do to announce, without having made the most searching inquiries into the truth of the statement: "A man was seen furtively throwing a paper-bag into a rhododendron-bush at Abinger Hammer. To the Boy Scout who demanded his name he admitted, under pressure, that he was Mr. John Galsworthy." If this sort of thing were to happen the B.B.C. would soon be spending half its income in defending itself in libel actions. Yet, in order to shame the litter-thrower, we must name the litter-thrower. He has no conscience to which to appeal. If he had, he would not throw litter.

How far it is possible to preserve the amenities of the country, now that it has at last been discovered by the town, it is difficult to say. For the townsman likes to take with him into the country, not only the litter of the town, but the noise of the town, and to make the country resemble the town both to the eye and to the ear as far as this can be managed. The grass of the hillside is monotonously rural and so has to be made fit for urban frequentation by the aid of scattered newspapers and banana-skins. The songs



of birds and the sound of running water are insufficiently varied, and become tolerable only when half-drowned in the music of gramophones and the choruses of London. It is only a few days since a girl in the country was asked by a policeman to desist from singing and was prosecuted for refusing to do so, and her defence makes it clear that a new type of townsman and townswoman has arrived, and is eager to create a new kind of countryside. She declared that "every militant Rambler and lover of the country" would be on her side in demanding the right to sing. I forget whether it was in a country town or in the open country that she had the argument with the policeman, but at least she was on a rambling holiday, and, during a ramble, even the towns one visits are in the country. What filled me with alarm, as I read a report of the case, was her use of the word "militant" to describe the new race of country-lovers. I have always regarded a country walk as one of the most pacific of pleasures. But this will be so no more if the young begin to walk militantly. Birds'-nesting, shooting, fishing—these are all more or less militant. Militant tactics may even be employed in flower-picking. But how is it possible to ramble militantly, unless this means simply making a noise?

There are two kinds of people who make a noise in the country—those who sing as if singing were the natural thing to do, and those who sing as if they were challenging the universe to stop them. In many parts of the country the inhabitants sing as naturally as the birds, and a crowd of Welshmen can sing in the country without turning it into an imitation of a street in a town. In London, on the other hand, we often hear the young singing largely in order to draw attention to themselves. They sing as if they had never heard a good song well sung in their lives, and as



though the human throat were an instrument of the same order as the buzzer, the squeaker, and the mouth-organ. They may be heard in Camden Town on Saturday night, and I have heard them on the banks of the Thames near Maidenhead on Sunday. I do not know whether "militant Rambler" means a Rambler who claims the right to do that sort of thing—but if it does I hope the propaganda against litter-throwing will be extended so as to embrace militant rambling. Halls might be provided by the municipalities in which militant rambles could relieve their feelings by yelling before they set out on their rambles. To make a noise is good, and to exercise the lungs by making even the most hideous noises is good, but there is a place for everything. The motto of every true Rambler, while in the country, should be: "Less noise, please." Otherwise, song, which is a gift of the gods, may have to be suppressed as a nuisance, like the jactation of walnut-shells in Hyde Park.

## SILENCE

**S**ILENCE is unnatural to man. He begins life with a cry and ends it in stillness. In the interval he does all he can to make a noise in the world, and there are few things of which he stands in more fear than of the absence of noise. Even his conversation is in great measure a desperate attempt to prevent a dreadful silence. If he is introduced to a fellow mortal, and a number of pauses occur in the conversation, he regards himself as a failure, a worthless person, and is full of envy of the emptiest-headed chatterbox. He knows that ninety-nine per cent of human conversation means no more than the buzzing of a fly, but he longs to join in the buzz and to prove that he is a man and not a waxwork figure. The object of conversation is not, for the most part, to communicate ideas: it is to keep up the buzzing sound. There are, it must be admitted, different qualities of buzz: there is even a buzz that is as exasperating as the continuous ping of a mosquito. But at a dinner-party one would rather be a mosquito than a mute. Most buzzing, fortunately, is agreeable to the ear, and some of it is agreeable even to the mind. He would be a foolish man, however, who waited until he had a wise thought to take part in the buzzing with his neighbours. Those who despise the weather as a conversational opening seem to me to be ignorant of the reason why human beings wish to talk. Very few human beings join in a conversation in the hope of learning anything new. Some of them are content if they are merely allowed to go on making a noise into other

people's ears, though they have nothing to tell them except that they have seen two or three new plays or that they had bad food in a Swiss hotel. At the end of an evening during which they have said nothing at immense length, they justly plume themselves on their success as conversationalists. I have heard a young man holding up the monologue of a prince among modern wits for half an hour in order to tell us absolutely nothing about himself with opulent long-windedness. None of us except the young man himself liked it, but he looked as happy as if he had had a crown on his head.

Many of us, indeed, do not enjoy conversation unless it is we ourselves who are making the most conspicuous noise. This, I think, is a vice in conversation, but has its origin in a natural hatred of silence. The young man was so much afraid of silence that he dared not risk being silent himself lest a universal silence should follow. If he failed as a talker, it was because he did not sufficiently realize that conversation should be not only a buzz but a sympathetic buzz. That is why the weather is so useful a subject. It brings people at once to an experience which is generally shared and enables them, as it were, to buzz on the same note. Having achieved this harmony, they advance by miraculous stages to other sympathies, and, as note succeeds note, a pleasant and varied little melody of conversation is made, as satisfying to the ear and mind as the music of a humming-top. The discovery of new notes of sympathy is the secret of all good conversation. It is because this is necessary to good conversation that a conversation of a party of three is so often a failure. Two of them discover a note of sympathy, and they begin to buzz on it enthusiastically, forgetful of the fact that it is an occasion not for a double but for a triple buzz. Two of them, perhaps,

have been at the same college of the same university. They go on for an hour happily sharing experiences in sentences like, "You remember old Crocker?" "You remember the day he——?" "You remember the night he stole the policeman's helmet?" "But the funniest thing of all was the day he threw the bowl of tulips out of the window and nearly brained old ——" (naming a famous professor of Greek). Reminiscences are the best conversation in the world for two; they warm the heart and excite the brain like wine. But the third man is all the more conscious of being out in the cold, because these names and events, which are a sort of algebraic symbols of the emotions to them, are to him meaningless. He does not know who "old Towser" was, or who "old Billy Tubbs," or who "old Snorter Richardson." He smiles mechanically as the others laugh with dreamier and dreamier eyes over incidents that convey all the fun of youth to them but that to him seem mere inanities of the memory. A conversation of this kind is bad, indeed, because it condemns the third man to the torture of compulsory silence. You may have an excellent conversation of three where one man is voluntarily silent, but you cannot have good conversation where one of the three is necessarily silent.

It is not only in our social life, however, that we dread silence. We love noise more than we know, even when no other human being is present. When we go from town to live in the country we deceive ourselves if we think we are doing so in order to exchange noise for quietness. We go into the country, not in order to escape from noise, but in search of a different kind of noise. Sit in a country garden in May, and you will notice that the noise is continuous. The birds are as loquacious as women: the bees as inimical to silence as children. Cocks crow, hen cackle.



dogs bark, sheep baa, cartwheels crunch, and the whole day passes in a succession of sounds which would drive us to distraction if we were really devotees of silence. When evening falls, and the voice of the last cuckoo fades into a universal stillness, we are aware of a new awe as of something supernatural. The fear of the dark is largely a fear of silence. It is difficult to believe that the world is entirely uninhabited, and, if it is not filled with the noises of men and animals, we begin—at least, a good many of us do—to suspect the silent presence of something unseen and terrible. Noise is companionship, and I remember that I, as a child, liked even the ticking of a clock in the bedroom. How good it was, too, to open the bedroom window and hear the pleasant prose of a corncrake coming from the meadows through the darkness! There are sounds that are terrifying at night, but they are chiefly so because of the stillness that is broken by them. The breathing of a cow behind a hedge, as you pass along a silent road at midnight, may startle you, but it is not the cow, it is the silence, that has startled you. If nature, indeed, could contrive to maintain all her busy sounds through the night, darkness would lose more than half its terrors.

For complete silence produces feelings of awe in us even in the full blaze of day. If you could imagine yourself the last living thing on earth but the plants, and if you knew that you were immortal and secure from danger for ever, what horror you would feel of a world in which there was no sound but the sound of your own feet or of your own voice if you had the heart to use it! If there were birds and dogs and cats and cows and sheep, you might endure your solitude with philosophy. I should not care for it myself even then, but I should suffer less than if I were the last living creature on a silent globe, on which a motionless



sea never broke the stillness of any shore. We speak of the silence of the grave, and without noise the world would be no better than a grave. To survive alone upon its lifeless surface would be to be buried alive, and most of us, if we were given the choice, would commit suicide in order to escape from it. This is not to say that we never enjoy the awfulness of silence. Travellers in the mountains and among the snows, discoverers of dead and deserted cities, can thrill us with their descriptions of the profound stillness of the scenes, as though to penetrate into such silence were to step into a new world. Silence such as this keys us up to unaccustomed excitements and susceptibilities. London seen from Westminster Bridge in the silence of dawn moved Wordsworth with a majesty unknown in the busy clamour of noon. In silence we seem to approach the border of some mysterious reality that has escaped us in the din of common life. Hence it is that, if we go into a cathedral, we are offended by those who bring into it noise and restlessness. The cathedral moves us most deeply in perfect stillness. It is no mere superstition that bids us be silent or, if we must speak, lower our voices to a whisper. We cannot even see the cathedral so that its beauty passes into the imagination and the memory save in perfect silence.

Certain religious bodies have recognized the value of silence, and mystics have told us that it is through silence rather than through speech that we arrive at a knowledge of the secret of life. Certainly, the increase in the noisiness of mankind does not seem to lead to any great increase of wisdom. Cynics are doubtful whether any useful end is served by the ceremony of the Two Minutes' Silence that has now become an annual event in England and some other countries on Armistice Day; but having been in a London

street, when all the traffic died down into perfect stillness, and every human being in sight stood motionless as a stone in a silent world, I like a million others have felt the spell of the transformation. London of the bus and dray and warehouse seemed to be touched with a mystery and strangeness that meant more to the imagination than the hooting of horns and the hurry of trampling feet. One aged man, indeed, did advance through the deathlike stillness of the figures of his fellow creatures—an aged man in a faded bowler and with a pipe in his mouth. I do not know whether he even noticed that men and women had suddenly become statues and that the traffic of the streets was as still as the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. There was no sound on earth for a time but the whisper and squeaking of the old man's boots becoming less and less as it disappeared into the distance. Instead of breaking the silence, it seemed to intensify it. And no one even turned a head to look after him. Perhaps he had never heard of Armistice Day. Perhaps—lucky man—he had never heard even of the war. But how typical he was of his kind in his incapacity for remaining still! The rest of us, it is true, can succeed in remaining silent for two minutes. But, at the sound of the gun, with what a cheerful tumult we rush back again into the clamour of ordinary life!

## CATS

THE Champion Cat Show has been held at the Crystal Palace, but the champion cat was not there. One could not possibly allow him to appear in public. He is for show, but not in a cage. He does not compete, because he is above competition. You know this as well as I. Probably you possess him. I certainly do. That is the supreme test of a cat's excellence—the test of possession. One does not say: "You should see Brailsford's cat," or "You should see Adcock's cat" or "You should see Sharp's cat," but "You should see our cat." There is nothing we are more egoistic about—not even children—than about cats. I have heard a man, for lack of anything better to boast about, boasting that his cat eats cheese. In any one else's cat it would have seemed an inferior habit and only worth mentioning to the servant as a warning. But because the cat happens to be his cat, this man talks about its vice excitedly among women as though it were an accomplishment. It is seldom that we hear a cat publicly reproached with guilt by any one above a cook. He is not permitted to steal from our own larder. But if he visits the next-door house by stealth and returns over the wall with a Dover sole in his jaws, we really cannot help laughing. We are a little nervous at first, and our mirth is tinged with pity at the thought of the probably elderly and dyspeptic gentleman who has had his luncheon filched away almost from under his nose. If we were quite sure that it was from No. 14, and not from No. 9 or No. 11, that the fish had been stolen, we might—conceivably—call round and

offer to pay for it. But with a cat one is never quite sure. And we cannot call round on all the neighbours and make a general announcement that our cat is a thief. In any case the next move lies with the wronged neighbour. As day follows day, and there is no sign of his irate and murder-bent figure advancing up the path, we recover our mental balance and begin to see the cat's exploit in a new light. We do not yet extol it on moral grounds, but undoubtedly, the more we think of it, the deeper becomes our admiration. Of the two great heroes of the Greeks we admire one for his valour and one for his cunning. The epic of the cat is the epic of Odysseus. The old gentleman with the Dover sole gradually assumes the aspect of a Polyphemus outwitted and humiliated to the point of not even being able to throw things after his tormentor. Clever cat! Nobody else's cat could have done such a thing. We should like to celebrate the Rape of the Dover Sole in Latin verse.

As for the Achillean sort of prowess, we do not demand it of a cat, but we are proud of it when it exists. There is a pleasure in seeing strange cats fly at his approach, either in single file over the wall or in the scattered aimlessness of a bursting bomb. Theoretically, we hate him to fight, but, if he does fight and comes home with a torn ear, we have to summon up all the resources of our finer nature in order not to rejoice on noticing that the cat next door looks as though it had been through a railway accident. I am sorry for the cat next door. I hate him so, and it must be horrible to be hated. But he should not sit on my wall and look at me with yellow eyes. If his eyes were any other colour—even the blue that is now said to be the mark of the runaway husband—I feel certain I could just manage to endure him. But they are the sort of yellow eyes that you expect to see looking out at you from a hole



in the panelling in a novel by Mr. Sax Rohmer. The only reason why I am not frightened of them is that the cat is so obviously frightened of me. I never did him any injury unless to hate is to injure. But he lowers his head when I appear as though he expected to be guillotined. He does not run away: he merely crouches like a guilty thing. Perhaps he remembers how often he has stepped delicately over my seed-beds, but not so delicately as to leave no mark of ruin among the infant lettuces and the less-than-infant autumn-sprouting broccoli. These things I could forgive him, but it is not easy to forgive him the look in his eyes when he watches a bird at its song. They are ablaze with evil. He becomes a sort of Jack the Ripper at the opera. People tell us that we should not blame cats for this sort of thing—that it is their nature and so forth. They even suggest that a cat is no more cruel in eating robin than we are cruel ourselves in eating chicken. This seems to me to be quibbling. In the first place, there is an immense difference between a robin and a chicken. In the second place, we are willing to share our chicken with the cat—at least, we are willing to share the skin and such of the bones as are not required for soup. Besides, a cat has not the same need of delicacies as a human being. It can eat, and even digest, anything. It can eat the black skin of filleted plaice. It can eat the bits of gristle that people leave on the side of their plates. It can eat boiled cod. It can eat New Zealand mutton. There is no reason why an animal with so indiscriminating a palate should demand song-birds for its food, when even human beings, who are fairly unscrupulous eaters, have agreed in some measure to abstain from them. On reflection, however, I doubt if it is his appetite for birds that makes the cat with the yellow eyes feel guilty. If you were able to talk to



him in his own language, and formulate your accusations against him as a bird-eater, he would probably be merely puzzled and look on you as a crank. If you pursued the argument and compelled him to moralize his position, he would, I fancy, explain that the birds were very wicked creatures and that their cruelties to the worms and the insects were more than flesh and blood could stand. He would work himself up into a generous idealization of himself as the guardian of law and order amid the bloody strife of the cabbage-patch—the preserver of the balance of nature. If cats were as clever as we, they would compile an atrocities blue-book about worms. Alas, poor thrush, with how bedraggled a reputation you would come through such an exposure! With how Hunnish a tread you would be depicted treading the lawn, sparing neither age nor sex, seizing the infant worm as it puts out its head to take its first bewildered peep at the rolling sun! Cats could write sonnets on such a theme. . . . Then there is that other beautiful potential poem, *The Cry of the Snail* . . . How tender-hearted cats are! Their sympathy seems to be all but universal, always on the look-out for an object, ready to extend itself anywhere where it is needed, except, as is but human, to their victims. Yellow eyes or not, I begin to be persuaded that the cat next door is a noble fellow. It may well be that his look as I pass is a look not of fear but of repulsion. He has seen me going out among the worms with a sharp—no, not a very sharp—spade, and regards me as no better than an ogre. If I could only explain to him! But I shall never be able to do so. He could no more appreciate my point of view about worms than I can appreciate his about robins. Luckily, we both eat chicken. This may ultimately help us to understand one another.

On the other hand, part of the fascination of cats may be due to the fact that it is so difficult to come to an understanding with them. A man talks to a horse or a dog as to an equal. To a cat he has to be deferential as though it had some Sphinx-like quality that baffled him. He cannot order a cat about with the certainty of being obeyed. He cannot be sure that, if he speaks to it, it will even raise its eyes. If it is perfectly comfortable, it will not. A cat is obedient only when it is hungry or when it takes the fancy. It may be a parasite, but it is never a servant. The dog does your bidding, but you do the cat's. At the same time, the contrast between the cat and the dog has often been exaggerated by dog-lovers. They tell you stories of dogs that remained with their dead masters, as though there were no fidelity in cats. It was only the other day, however, that the newspapers gave an account of a cat that remained with the body of its murdered mistress in the most faithful tradition of the dogs. I know, again, of cats that will go out for a walk with a human fellow-creature, as dogs do. I have frequently seen a lady walking across Hampstead Heath with a cat in train. When you go for a walk with a dog, however, the dog protects you: when you go for a walk with a cat, you feel that you are protecting the cat. It is strange that the cat should have imposed the myth of its helplessness on us. It is an animal with an almost boundless capacity for self-help. It can jump up walls. It can climb trees. It can run, as the proverb says, like "greased lightning." It is armed like an African chief. Yet it has contrived to make itself a pampered pet, so that we are alarmed if it attempts to follow us out of the gate into a world of dogs, and only feel happy when it is purring—rolling on its back and purring as we rub its Adam's apple—by the fireside. There is

nothing that gives a greater sense of comfort than the purring of a cat. It is the most flattering music in nature. One feels, as one listens, like a humble lover in a bad novel, who says: "You do, then, like me—a little—after all?" The fact that a cat is not utterly miserable in our presence always comes with the freshness and delight of a surprise. The happiness of a crowing baby, newly introduced to us, may be still more flattering, but a cat will get round people who cannot tolerate babies.

It is all the more to be wondered at that a cat, which is such a master of this conversational sort of music, should ever attempt any other. There never was an animal less fit to be a singer. Some one—was it Cowper?—has said that there are no really ugly voices in nature, and that he could imagine that there was something to be said even for the donkey's bray. I should have thought that the beautiful voices in nature were few, and that most of them could be defended only on the ground of some pleasant association. Humanity, at least, has been unanimous in its condemnation of the cat as part of nature's chorus. Poems have been written in praise of the corncrake as a singer, but never of the cat. All the associations we have with cats have not accustomed us to that discordant howl. It converts love itself into a torment such as can be found only in the pages of a twentieth-century novel. In it we hear the jungle decadent—the beast in dissolution, but not yet civilized. When it rises at night outside the window, we always explain to visitors: "No; that's not Peter. That's the cat next door with the yellow eyes." The man who will not defend the honour of his cat cannot be trusted to defend anything.

## ON BEING MEASURED FOR A SUIT OF CLOTHES

**H**OW gravely the words run into the rhythm of blank verse! Milton himself never wrote a line of blank verse that was more impeccable. Emotion, it is said, generates rhythm of speech, and who can enter a tailor's shop without emotion? I have certainly never been able to do so. And I am not sure that this is entirely due to the tailor. The truth is, I seldom call on him except when the only alternative is a quarrel and a lasting breach with my relations. First, there are weeks of mild admonition: "You ought to have some new clothes. You are getting quite shabby." Gradually the tone of command creeps in: "You must have new clothes. Do ask E. V. the name of his tailor." A week later italics make their appearance: "You *must* get a new suit." Italics quickly give way to small capitals: "You **MUST** get a **NEW SUIT**. Will you go and get measured this afternoon?" "No, no," I protest, "to-day is Friday. Nothing would persuade me to be measured for a new suit on a Friday." "Well, then, on Monday." Luckily, Monday is usually the thirteenth or something equally impossible, and I have another good argument for postponement. A few days later there is an appeal to my better nature in the form of an outrageous falsehood: "You know you promised." This fails, as it deserves to fail, but at last there comes a morning when I find myself in a corner, threatened with both horns of a dilemma: "Will you go and get measured to-day, or shall I call for you in town and take you?" It is tyranny, but



I know that I am beaten: "All right, but he's sure to want a deposit, and I haven't any money." "Give him a cheque." "If I'm so shabby as you say I am, he'd probably refuse it." "Well, call in at the butcher's and get him to cash a cheque on your way into town." "I don't know the butcher." "That doesn't matter. He probably knows you. He must often have seen you passing." "If I'm so shabby as you say I am, he probably took me for a tramp." "Now you see what comes of dressing so badly. You're frightened of your own butcher." "No, I'm not. I'm frightened of bringing disgrace on all of you by being arrested in a butcher's shop for trying to get money by false pretences." "Oh, well, I'll come with you as far as the butcher's." "Don't trouble, I'll cash a cheque in town myself. But really I don't know when I'll have time to go to the tailor's. I promised to lunch with Jones to-day." "I'll ring up Mr. Jones and explain." "Oh, don't trouble. Besides, I'm not sure that he didn't say yesterday that he wouldn't be able to come." Certainly a man would need to be an eel in order to be able to argue with a woman. Women have such a talent for shifting their ground that one has at times to resort to positive invention in order to keep up with them. "Good-bye," I say sullenly, as I put on my coat, for I hate having my day ruined like this; "what did you say the tailor's name was?" "I think it was Turtle, or Tompkinson, or Tarbutt, or some name like that. Anyhow, you'll be able to find him quite easily. He's Alan's tailor." "What's his number?" I ask gloomily, for I know at least the name of the street. "I don't know his number, but Alan said his shop was at the wrong end of the street." "Which is the wrong end of the street?" "I don't know. Go and look at it and see." "But in what way is it the wrong end? Is it wrong morally, or



architecturally, or socially? Does he mean that it's the end or the cheap end?" "Oh, the cheap, I'm sure." "Honestly, I think I ought to put off going till we've seen Alan again and got some information about his tailor."

Excellent though my reasoning was, I found myself later in the day walking along a street which seemed to be mainly inhabited by tailors, and turning over in my mind the problem of how to find the right shop in the wrong end of it. I walked up and down it twice till an idle policeman began to look at me. I felt that I must dive before long into some shop or other if only in order to escape his scrutiny. The nearest approach to Turtle or Tompkinson or Tarbutt that I saw among the names on the shops was Pigeon, so I opened the door and went in. "I want to be measured for a suit," I said. "Thank you, sir," he said; "what colour?" I said dark grey, for I had been told to say dark grey. As he looked among the rolls of cloth, he asked, "Any recommendation?" "Mr. Hereward gave me your name," I said. "We always like," he said, "to know the name of any one who sends us a new customer so that we may write and thank him." I had a curious feeling of elation at that. Here was I who had been called disgracefully shabby, and had been talked to as if I were a scarecrow or an old rag-and-bone man, and yet a respectable tailor was about to write and thank a man of fashion for having introduced me to him. "Either," I thought, "I cannot be so shabby-looking after all, or the tailor sees that beneath a shabby waistcoat there possibly beats a purse of gold."

I warmed to the tailor to such a degree in consequence that, when he unrolled a length of dark grey cloth, I said, "Yes, that will do excellently." He said, "There's another

cloth I'd like to show you," and he showed it to me. I looked at it, and said: "I think I'll have that one." "But," he declared, "if you prefer something darker, here's something that might suit you," and spread a third cloth on the top of the other two. "Yes," I said, looking at it, "I think that's the nicest of the three." "But," said the tailor, producing yet another roll of cloth, "if you want something that will last for ever, I have a pattern here that I think will please you." "Yes," I agreed, "I like that very much. I think I'll have that." "But," cried the tailor, "if you think you'd like something else better——" "No, no," I pleaded, "don't show me any more. It only makes it more difficult to choose." "Well," he agreed, "I don't think you'll be disappointed in any of those that I have shown you. Which did you say you preferred?" I took up one of the cloths between my finger and thumb and said with an air of decision, "That one." "Oh," he said, tugging one of the others into view, "you would rather have it than this one?" I looked at this one, hesitated, and was lost. "No," I said, "I think I'll have this one." "Of course," he said, watching my face closely and then pointing at the third of the cloths, "you'll not get the same wear out of any of them as out of that." I nodded consideringly. "Well, perhaps, after all," I said, "I'd better have that." As to which of the cloths I chose in the end, I know no more than Adam. It was an exhausted frame that the tailor led off into an inner room to undergo the ordeal of tape measurement.

I stood in the midst of a superfluity of mirrors while he measured me as unemotionally as if I had been a corpse. As he measured, he and an invisible man outside the door kept talking in that strange jargon of numbers that nobody

but a tailor can understand. "41½," called the tailor loudly. "41½," came the far-away answer of the ghost. "18½" declared the tailor *forte*. "18½," repeated the ghost *piano*. "12¾," lustily insisted the tailor. "12¾," weakly wailed the ghost. "By the way," I interrupted this extraordinary conversation after a time, "I suppose you have noticed that I carry a good many things in my pockets. I hope you won't have the clothes too well cut, for I should only spoil them." "I see what you mean," said the tailor, "you would like them a little loose." "Loose," I assented, "but not too loose." "I see," said he, "and the trousers?" "Oh, just ordinary trousers." "Ordinary trousers," he called out to the ghost. "Trousers ordinary," piped the ghost. Noting a certain disappointment in his voice, I asked him: "What is the opposite of ordinary in trousers? Do you mean turned-up or do you mean the sort of trousers *Punch* makes fun of?" "Well, trousers are being worn a little wider this year. I think wider trousers would suit you." "Well," said I, looking in the glass, and catching a glimpse of a pair of legs in ordinary trousers, "if you think so, I don't mind having them a little wider, so long as you don't make them as wide as the trousers in *Punch*." "Oh, no," he said; "the great art in dress, as in everything else, is not to run to extremes." I rather suspect that the origin of the Oxford trousers was the mistake of a tailor who got his numbers mixed and put the waist-measurement in the wrong place. The tailor told me that he had recently cut a pair of trousers for an undergraduate which measured forty-four inches round the foot. I have no head for figures, but I think he said forty-four. Having pledged him to attempt no extravagance of this kind on me, I permitted him to aim at a decorous compromise. This, I fancy,

pleased him, for when, as I was coming away, I offered to pay him some money in advance, he brushed the offer aside lightly. "Oh, no," he said, "we don't require anything of that kind from any one with a good recommendation." As I came out of the door, I looked up and down the wrong end of the street and asked myself: "Can this be London or am I in Heaven?"

Since then, I have been back to have the suit "tried on" for the first time. It did not, perhaps, look at its best as the tailor covered it with chalk-marks and ripped away a temporary canvas collar. "How do you like the sleeves?" he asked me. "I think they're exactly right," I said. "Just a shade on the long side?" he suggested. "Well," I agreed, "perhaps just a shade." And he took a piece of chalk and drew a line round the cuff, assuring me that they would look much better half an inch shorter. "And the waistcoat—does the opening come down far enough?" "Yes, I think it's just right." "Perhaps, just another inch or so?" "Well, perhaps." "And the coat—is it quite long enough?" And he turned a mirror so that it reflected another mirror which in turn reflected my back. It was, I confess, a view to humiliate even a proud man. Impossible to describe it as the back of a Greek god or to pretend that it was as straight as an arrow. Then the bald patch at the back of the head—the last time I had seen it was at a tailor's when it was no larger than a baby's palm. Since then it had spread till it was now a very pool of atrichia. "God knows," thought I, as I surveyed the back of the strange figure in the glass within the glass, "for such as you any old suit would serve. You and your new clothes," I reflected bitterly. "Bald and ambitious dreamer, go back to your shabbiness. You are mortal and the very crown of your head bears evidences of your decay." I came

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out into the street, pondering on the brevity of human  
life.

I walked slowly till I came to the right end of the street.  
Then, as I turned the corner, I suddenly remembered some-  
thing. "I must get a new hat," I said.



## WITHOUT A SMILE

THE Georgians are accustomed to regard the Victorians as a grave race, stiff with conventionalism and censorious of enjoyment. This is an illusion of a kind to which the next generation but one has always been susceptible. The truth about the Victorian age is, of course, that instead of being more solemn than the ages that have succeeded it, it was much too hilarious to please the taste of a critical Georgian generation. It was an age that laughed at puns, that roared at "laughing songs" in the music-halls, that entered heartily into the spirit of bun-eating competitions. Its very drawing-room jokes were of a simple-souled hilarity almost inconceivable to a generation that has fallen under the shadow of Freud.

I came lately on a little book, *Fun and Flirtation, Forfeits*, which contains the rules for a number of games suitable for playing at a mid-Victorian party. Few of the games survive to-day, a sad proof of the decline of risibility. Possibly, in some remote cathedral city the unspoiled young are still playing the delicious game called "The Canaries," but I confess I had never heard of it till I read the description of it in *Fun and Flirtation*. It is played by one lady and one gentleman, sitting in the middle of the room and addressing each other thus in the manner of canaries:

GENTLEMAN: Sweet.

LADY: Sweet (*echo*).

GENTLEMAN: Sweet, sweet.

LADY: Sweet, sweet (*echo*).

GENTLEMAN: Sweet, sweet, pretty sweet.

LADY: Sweet, sweet, pretty sweet (*echo*).

(*Neither must smile.*)

The lady and gentleman might not be permitted to smile, but be sure the onlookers did. And what scenes of mirth must have taken place while the game called "Poor Puss" was in progress—a game in which "all the ladies and one gentleman" were the players, and in which "the gentleman goes round and says to each lady, 'Puss, Puss,' to which she must gravely answer 'Me-ew! Me-ew!'" the first to smile paying a forfeit. A more elaborate variation of "Poor Puss" is described under the name of "Miss Ann and Jane Smith's Tabby Cats," which required the participation of two gentlemen and all the ladies. "The ladies all remain in their places, and two gentlemen in shawls and bonnets or caps go round, one with a saucer of milk, the other with a tea-spoon with which he gives a sip of milk to each, saying, 'Take that, pretty puss!' to which, after taking it, 'Puss' must gravely answer, 'Me-ew!'" giggling all the more helplessly no doubt, because she is forbidden to giggle. And yet the Victorians are commonly portrayed for us as a population of statues fitted only for exhibition in a cemetery. But have we such fun nowadays? Would our eyes brighten at the spectacle of that good game "Magic Music," in which four gentlemen, forbidden to smile, "must be seated in a row, and, throwing themselves back in their chairs, must all snore in different keys, the 'Dead March in Saul' being played over three times as an accompaniment"? The young, I fear, have become aged since America discovered Europe and introduced a new rhythm of pleasure.

It has always been a favourite amusement with children

to attempt to preserve their gravity, while other people try to make them laugh, and most of these games are of this kind. It is the loss of gravity that is the supreme and penalty-bringing joke, and again and again the rules of the game include the phrase "without smiling." In a thousand years, when the world has become civilized, this may be regarded as convincing evidence of the agelastic grimness of the Victorians, and post-psycho-analysts will probably be expatiating on the dark minds of parents who could forbid their children to laugh even during so harmless a nonsense-game as "Botanical Questions"—a game in which a gentleman goes to each of the ladies in turn and says to her

How many pretty noses goes  
To make a bunch of roses?

to which the lady must answer:

I suppose two noses  
Make a bunch of roses.

"No laughing, or begin again" runs the harsh instruction.

Possibly, Victorian parents saw in those games a valuable means of educating their children in self-control. Possibly, they did not. Yet what a race of Roman matrons must have grown up if mid-Victorian girls could have played without smiling a game so conducive to mirth as "Misapplied Talent!" In this game:

The ladies all rise and stand behind their chairs; the gentleman coming up to each chair compliments it on its wood, covering, shape, and antiquity, finishing by a

profound bow, and placing his lips on the top of it. The lady it belongs to must say, without even smiling, "Valuable talents greatly misapplied."

Faintly indecorous, you may think, for the subjects of Queen Victoria. But you have only to read the account of the game called "The United Circle," in order to realize that the author of *Fun and Flirtation, Forfeits*, would not for an instant have tolerated anything that might involve indecorum. Here "one Lady begins the Game":

A lady is to stand in the middle of the room, and wish aloud for one of the gentlemen or ladies present to join her there. When the person called has obeyed the summons, he or she is in like manner to wish for some one else, each person wished for taking the hand of the last speaker. This wishing for a companion is continued till a circle is formed, by the last player giving his or her hand, both to the person who summoned him, and to the lady who began the game. The lady who commences then kisses her right-hand neighbour, i.e., the friend she chose herself, and the kiss is to be passed round the circle. As the ladies generally wish for each other, it will be found that no indecorum and a great deal of fun may be found in the game.

After that, who can deny that innocent enjoyment is the prevailing note of these games? What could be more Eden-like than "The Musical Duck," in which a gentleman "chooses any lady who can sing, and she is to sing, to any air she pleases, the words 'Quack! quack!' using no other words and singing the air correctly"? What could be more reminiscent of the Golden Age than "Great People," in

which a lady and gentleman stand facing each other, the lady saying:

I am pretty Princess Pep-pew-pew-pop-woski,  
And am extremely nervous,

the gentleman replying:

I am gallant Marshal Mimi-mew-mew-koski,  
And greatly at your service,

while they "bow and curtsy profoundly to each other, with solemn gravity"? Nor even in "Welsh Courtship," played by one lady and one gentleman, is there anything to bring the blush to the cheek of innocence:

GENTLEMAN: Miss Wynn, I'm dying!

LADY: Mr. Davies, I'm sighing!

GENTLEMAN: Would Miss Wynn  
Accept my fin.

LADY: No, Mr. Davies;

I don't want a *rara avis*.

An aesthete might frown on pastimes so unintellectual, but the moralist can scarcely quarrel with them. And the forfeits themselves are all within the bound of the strictest propriety, as may be gathered from the list suggested:

1. The lady is to go to three gentlemen and ask each a favour—(i.e., the favours may be as absurd as she pleases. She may ask for a song, or for him to imitate a teapot, crow, bark, etc.).

2. To curtsy to each of the gentlemen without smiling—(i.e., the gentleman must try to say or do something to make the task difficult).



3. To remain perfectly silent for five minutes, while the other players question, tease, or coax her to speak.

Nothing surely could be more suggestive of a serene and placid, and, at the same time, easily-amused world than this record of vanished games, written with such a sense of respectable delight. Now that the reaction towards Victorianism has begun, we may yet see a revival of some of them, organized in the parks by Mr. Lansbury. It is not long, indeed, since I saw in a newspaper a description of a still-existing game, which seemed to me almost worthy of a place in *Fun and Flirtation* for its mirthful possibilities. It was called "Prison Diet," and the description of it ran: "An amusing forfeit is to place the victim, blindfolded, in the middle of the room, to be fed with spoonfuls of water by all the players in turn until he guesses who is feeding him." What fun! It is not a game that I should care to play myself, but I welcome even the faintest symptom of the return of the boisterous sanity of the Victorians. While "Prison Diet" is played, the last spark of Victorianism cannot be said to be extinguished beyond hope of revival.

## A. A. MILNE

### EXPERTS

THE man in front of the fire was telling us a story about his wife and a bottle of claret. He had taken her to the best restaurant in Paris and had introduced her to a bottle of the famous Château Whatsitsname, 1320 (or thereabouts), a wine absolutely priceless—although the management, with its customary courtesy, had allowed him to pay a certain amount for it. Not realizing that it was actually the famous Whatsitsname, she had drunk it in the ordinary way, neither holding it up to the light and saying, "Ah, there's a wine!" nor rolling it round the palate before swallowing. On the next day they went to a commonplace restaurant and drank a local and contemporary vintage at five francs the bottle, of similar colour but very different temperament. When she had finished her glass, she said hesitatingly, "Of course, I don't know anything about wine, and I dare say I'm quite wrong, but I can't help feeling that the claret we had last night was better than this."

The man in front of the fire was rather amused by this, as were most of his audience. For myself, I felt that the lady demanded my admiration rather than my amusement. Without the assistance of the labels, many of us might have decided that it was the five-franc vintage which was the better wine. She didn't. Indeed, I am inclined to read more into the story than is perhaps there; I believe that she had misunderstood her husband, and had thought

that the second bottle was the famous, aged, and priceless Château Whatsitsname, and that, in spite of this, she gave it as her opinion that the first wine, cheap and modern though it might be, was the better. Hats off, then, to a brave woman! How many of us would have her courage and her honesty?

But perhaps you who read this are an expert on wine. If so, you are lucky. I am an expert on nothing—nothing, anyhow, that matters. I envy all you experts tremendously. When I see a cigar-expert listening to his cigar before putting it in his mouth I wish that I were as great a man as he. Privately sometimes I have listened to a cigar, but it has told me nothing. The only way I can tell whether it is good or bad is by smoking it. Even then I could not tell you (without the assistance of the band) whether it was a Sancho Panza or a Guoco Piano. I could only tell you whether I liked it or not, a question of no importance whatever.

Lately I have been trying to become a furniture expert, but it is a disheartening business. I have a book called *Chats on Old Furniture*—a terrible title to have to ask for in a shop, but I asked boldly. Perhaps the word “chat” does not make other people feel as unhappy as it makes me. But even after reading this book I am not really an expert. I know now that it is no good listening to a Chippendale chair to see if it is really Chippendale; one must stroke it in order to find out whether it is a “genuine antique” or only a modern reproduction; but it is obvious that years of stroking would be necessary before an article of furniture would be properly responsive. Is it worth while wasting these years of one’s life? Indeed, is it worth while (I ask nervously) bothering whether a chair or a table is antique or modern so long as it is both useful and beautiful?

Well, let me tell you what happened to us yesterday. We found a dresser which appealed to us considerably, and we stood in front of it, looking at it. We decided that except for a little curly-wiggle at the top it was the jolliest dresser we had seen. "That's a fine old dresser," said the shopman, coming up at that moment, and he smacked it encouragingly. "A really fine old dresser, that." We agreed. "Except for those curly-wiggles," I added, pointing to them with my umbrella. "If we could take those off——" He looked at me reproachfully. "You wouldn't take *those* off?" he said. "Why, that's what tells you that it's a Welsh dresser of 1720." We didn't buy that dresser. We decided that the size or the price was all wrong. But I wonder now, supposing we had bought it, whether we should have had the pluck to remove the curly-wiggles (and let people mistake it for an English dresser of 1920) in order that, so abbreviated, it might have been more beautiful.

For furniture is not beautiful merely because it is old. It is absurd to suppose that everything made in 1720—or 1620 or 1520—was made beautifully, as it would be absurd to say that everything made in 1920 was beautiful. No doubt there will always be people who will regard the passing of time as sufficient justification for any article of furniture; I could wish that they were equally tolerant among the arts as among the crafts, so that in 2120 this very article which I write now could be referred to with awe as a genuine 1920; but all that the passage of time can really do for your dresser is to give a more beautiful surface and tone to the wood. This, surely, is a matter in which you can judge for yourself without being an expert. If your dresser looks old you have got from it all that age can give you; if it looks beautiful you have got from it all that

a craftsman of any period can give you; why worry, then, as to whether or not it is a "genuine antique"? The expert may tell you that it is a fake, but the fact that he has suddenly said so has not made your dining-room less beautiful. Or if it is less beautiful, it is only because an "expert" is now in it. Hurry him out.



## GEOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

THE other day I met a man who didn't know where Tripoli was. Tripoli happened to come into the conversation, and he was evidently at a loss. "Let's see," he said. "Tripoli is just down by the—er—you know. What's the name of that place?" "That's right," I answered, "just opposite Thingumabob. I could show you in a minute on the map. It's near—what do they call it?" At this moment the train stopped, and I got out and went straight home to look at my atlas.

Of course I really knew exactly where Tripoli was. About thirty years ago, when I learnt geography, one of the questions they were always asking me was, "What are the exports of Spain, and where is Tripoli?" But much may happen in thirty years; coast erosion and tidal waves and things like that. I looked at the map in order to assure myself that Tripoli had remained pretty firm. As far as I could make out it had moved. Certainly it must have looked different thirty years ago, for I took some little time to locate it. But no doubt one's point of view changes with the decades. To a boy Tripoli might seem a long way from Italy—even in Asia Minor; but when he grew up his standards of measurement would be altered. Tripoli would appear in its proper place due south of Sicily.

I always enjoy these periodic excursions to my atlas. People talk a good deal of nonsense about the importance of teaching geography at school instead of useless subjects like Latin and Greek, but so long as you have an atlas near

you, of what use is geography? Why waste time learning where Tripoli and Fiume are, when you can turn to a map of Africa and spot them in a moment? In a leading article in *The Times* (no less—our premier English newspaper) it was stated during a general election that Darlington was in Yorkshire. You may say that *The Times* leader writers ought to have been taught geography; I say that unfortunately they *have* been taught geography. They learnt, or thought they learnt, that Darlington was a Yorkshire town. If they had been left in a state of decent ignorance, they would have looked for Darlington in the map and found that it was in Durham. (One moment—Map 29—Yes, Durham; that's right.) As it is, there are at this moment some hundreds of retired colonels who go about believing implicitly that Darlington is in Yorkshire because *The Times* has said it. How much more important than a knowledge of geography is the possession of an atlas.

My own atlas is a particularly fine specimen. It contains all sorts of surprising maps which never come into ordinary geography. I think my favourite is a picture of the Pacific Ocean, coloured in varying shades of blue according to the depths of the sea. The deep ultramarine terrifies me. I tremble for a ship which is passing over it, and only breathe again when it reaches the very palest blue. There is one little patch—the Nero Deep in the Ladrone Basin—which is actually 31,614 ft. deep. I suppose if you sailed over it you would find it no bluer than the rest of the sea, and if you fell into it you would feel no more alarmed than if it were 31,613 ft. deep; but still you cannot see it in the atlas without a moment's awe.

Then my atlas has a map of "The British Empire showing the great commercial highways"; another of "The North

Polar regions showing the progress of explorations"; maps of the trade routes, of gulf streams, and beautiful things of that kind. It tells you how far it is from Southampton to Fremantle, so that if you are interested in the M.C.C. Australian team you can follow them day by day across the sea. Why, with all your geographical knowledge you couldn't even tell me the distance between Yokohama and Honolulu, but I can give the answer in a moment—3,379 miles. Also I know exactly what a section of the world along lat. 45 deg. N. looks like—and there are very few of our most learned men who can say as much.

But my atlas goes even farther than this, though I for one do not follow it. It gives diagrams of exports and imports; it tells you where things are manufactured or where grown; it gives pictures of sheep—an immense sheep representing New Zealand and a mere insect representing Russia, and alas! no sheep at all for Canada and Germany and China. Then there are large cigars for America and small mild cigars for France and Germany; pictures in colour of such unfamiliar objects as spindles and raw silk and miners and Mongolians and iron ore; statistics of traffic receipts and diamonds. I say that I don't follow my atlas here, because information of this sort does not seem to belong properly to an atlas. This is not my idea of geography at all. When I open my atlas I open it to look at maps—to find out where Tripoli is—not to acquire information about flax and things; yet I cannot forgo the boast that if I wanted I could even speak at length about flax.

And lastly there is the index. Running my eye down it, I can tell you in less than a minute where such different places as Jorobado, Kabba, Hidegkut, Paloo, and Pago Pago are to be found. Could you, even after your first-

class honours in the Geography Tripos, be as certain as I am? Of Hidegkut, perhaps, or Jorobado, but not of Pago Pago.

On the other hand, you might possibly have known where Tripoli was.

## GOLDFISH

LET us talk about—well, anything you will. Goldfish, for instance.

Goldfish are a symbol of old-world tranquillity or mid-Victorian futility according to their position in the home. Outside the home, in that wild state from which civilization has dragged them, they may have stood for dare-devil courage or constancy or devotion; I cannot tell. I may only speak of them now as I find them, which is in the garden or in the drawing-room. In their lily-leaved pool, sunk deep in the old flagged terrace, upon whose borders the blackbird whistles his early-morning song, they remind me of sundials and lavender and old delightful things. But in their cheap glass bowl upon the three-legged table, above which the cloth-covered canary maintains a stolid silence, they remind me of antimacassars and horsehair sofas and all that is depressing. It is hard that the goldfish himself should have so little choice in the matter.

Goldfish look pretty in the terrace pond, yet I doubt if it was the need for prettiness which brought them there. Rather the need for some thing to throw things to. No one of the initiate can sit in front of Nature's most wonderful effect, the sea, without wishing to throw stones into it, the physical pleasure of the effort and the aesthetic pleasure of the splash combining to produce perfect contentment. So by the margin of the pool the same desires stir within one, and because ants' eggs do not splash, and look untidy on the surface of the water, there must be a gleam of gold and silver to put the crown upon one's pleasure.



Perhaps when you have been feeding the goldfish you have not thought of it like that. But at least you must have wondered why, of all diets, they should prefer ants' eggs. Ants' eggs are, I should say, the very last thing which one would take to without argument. It must be an acquired taste, and, this being so, one naturally asks oneself how goldfish came to acquire it.

I suppose (but I am lamentably ignorant on these as on all other matters) that there was a time when goldfish lived a wild free life of their own. They roamed the sea or the river, or whatever it was, fighting for existence, and Nature showed them, as she always does, the food which suited them. Now I have often come across ants' nests in my travels, but never when swimming. In seas and rivers, pools and lakes, I have wandered, but Nature has never put ants' eggs in my way. No doubt—it would be only right—the goldfish has a keener eye than I have for these things, but if they had been there, should I have missed them so completely? I think not, for if they had been there, they must have been there in great quantities. I can imagine a goldfish slowly acquiring the taste for them through the centuries, but only if other food were denied to him, only if, wherever he went, ants' eggs, ants' eggs, ants' eggs drifted down the stream to him.

Yet, since it would seem that he has acquired the taste, it can only be that the taste has come to him with captivity—has been forced upon him, I should have said. The old wild goldfish (this is my theory) was a more terrible beast than we think. Given his proper diet, he could not have been kept within the limits of the terrace pool. He would have been unsuited to domestic life; he would have dragged in the shrieking child as she leant to feed him. As the result of many experiments ants' eggs were given him to

keep him thin (you can see for yourself what a bloodless diet it is), ants' eggs were given him to quell his spirit; and just as a man, if he has sufficient colds, can get up a passion even for ammoniated quinine, so the goldfish has grown in captivity to welcome the once-hated omelette.

Let us consider now the case of the goldfish in the house. His diet is the same, but how different his surroundings! If his bowl is placed on a table in the middle of the floor, he has but to flash his tail once and he has been all round the drawing-room. The drawing-room may not seem much to you, but to him this impressionist picture through the curved glass must be amazing. Let not the outdoor goldfish boast of his freedom. What does he, in his little world of water-lily roots, know of the vista upon vista which opens to his more happy brother as he passes jauntily from china dog to ottoman and from ottoman to Henry's father? Ah, here is life! It may be that in the course of years he will get used to it, even bored by it; indeed, for that reason I always advocate giving him a glance at the dining-room or the bedrooms on Wednesdays and Saturdays; but his first day in the bowl must be the opening of an undreamt-of heaven to him.

Again, what an adventurous life is his. At any moment a cat may climb up and fetch him out, a child may upset him, grown-ups may neglect to feed him or to change his water. The temptation to take him up and massage him must be irresistible to outsiders. All these dangers the goldfish in the pond avoids; he lives a sheltered and unexciting life, and when he wants to die he dies unnoticed, unregretted, but for his brother the tears and the solemn funeral.

Yes; now that I have thought it out, I can see that I was wrong in calling the indoor goldfish a symbol of mid-

Victorian futility. An essay of this sort is no good if it does not teach the writer something as well as his readers. I recognize him now as the symbol of enterprise and endurance, of restlessness and Post-Impressionism. He is not mid-Victorian, he is Fifth Georgian.

Which is all I want to say about goldfish.

## THE UNFAIRNESS OF THINGS

THE most interesting column in any paper (always excepting those which I write myself) is that entitled "The World's Press," wherein one may observe the world as it appears to a press of which one has for the most part never heard. It is in this column that I have just made the acquaintance of *The Shoe Manufacturers' Monthly*, the journal to which the elect turn eagerly upon each new moon. (Its one-time rival, *The Footwear Fortnightly*, has, I am told, quite lost its following.) The *bon mot* of the current number of *The S.M.M.* is a note to the effect that Kaffirs have a special fondness for boots which make a noise. I quote this simply as an excuse for referring to the old problem of the squeaky boots and the squeaky collar, the problem, in fact, of the unfairness of things.

The majors and clubmen who assist their country with columns of advice on clothes have often tried to explain why a collar squeaks, but have never done so to the satisfaction of any man of intelligence. They say that the collar is too large or too small, too dirty or too clean. They say that if you have your collars made for you (like a gentleman) you will be all right, but that if you buy the cheap, ready-made article, what can you expect? They say that a little soap on the outside of the shirt, or a little something on the inside of something else, that this, that, and the other will abate the nuisance. They are quite wrong.

The simple truth, and everybody knows it really, is that collars squeak for some people and not for others. A

squeaky collar round the neck of a man is a comment, not upon the collar, but upon the man. That man is unlucky. Things are against him. Nature may have done all for him that she could, have given him a handsome outside and a noble inside, but the world of inanimate objects is against him.

We all know the man whom children or dogs love instinctively. It is a rare gift to be able to inspire this affection. The Fates have been kind to him. But to inspire the affection of inanimate things is something greater. The man to whom a collar or a window sash takes instinctively is a man who may truly be said to have luck on his side.

Consider him for a moment. His collar never squeaks; his clothes take a delight in fitting him. At a dinner-party he walks as by instinct straight to his seat, what time you and I are dragging our partners round and round the table in search of our cards. The windows of taxicabs open to him easily. When he travels by train his luggage works its way to the front of the van and is the first to jump out at Paddington. String hastens to undo itself when he approaches; he is the only man who can make a decent impression with sealing-wax. If he is asked by the hostess in a crowded drawing-room to ring the bell, that bell comes out from behind the sofa where it hid from us and places itself in a convenient spot before his eyes. Asparagus stiffens itself at sight of him, macaroni winds itself round his fork.

You will observe that I am not describing just the ordinary lucky man. He may lose thousands on the Stock Exchange; he may be jilted; whenever he goes to the Oval to see Hobbs, Hobbs may be out first ball; he may invariably get mixed up in railway accidents. That is a kind



of ill-luck which one can bear, not indeed without grumbling, but without rancour. The man who is unlucky to experience these things at least has the consolation of other people's sympathy; but the man who is the butt of inanimate things has no one's sympathy. We may be on a motor bus which overturns and nobody will say that it is our fault, but if our collar deliberately and maliciously squeaks, everybody will say that we ought to buy better collars; if our dinner cards hide from us, or the string of our parcel works itself into knots, we are called clumsy; our asparagus and macaroni give us a reputation for bad manners; our luggage gets us a name for dilatoriness.

I think we, we others, have a right to complain. However lucky we may be in other ways, if we have not this luck of inanimate things we have a right to complain. It is pleasant, I admit, to win £500 on the Stock Exchange by a stroke of sheer good fortune, but even in the blue of this there is a cloud, for the next £500 that we win by a stroke of shrewd business will certainly be put down to luck. Luck is given the credit of all our successes, but the other man is given the credit of all his luck. That is why we have a right to complain.

I do not know why things should conspire against a man. Perhaps there is some justice in it. It is possible—nay, probable—that the man whom things love is hated by animals and children—even by his fellow-men. Certainly he is hated by me. Indeed, the more I think of him, the more I see that he is not a nice man in any way. The gods have neglected him; he has no good qualities. He is a worm. No wonder, then, that this small compensation is doled out to him—the gift of getting on with inanimate things. This gives him (with the unthinking) a certain reputation for readiness and dexterity. If ever you meet a

man with such a reputation, you will know what he really is.

Circumstances connected with the hour at which I rose this morning ordained that I should write this essay in a dressing-gown. I shall now put on a collar. I hope it will squeak.

## LUNCH

FOOD is a subject of conversation more spiritually refreshing even than the weather, for the number of possible remarks about the weather is limited, whereas of food you can talk on and on and on. Moreover, no heat of controversy is induced by mention of the atmospheric conditions (seeing that we are all agreed as to what is a good day and what is a bad one), and where there can be no controversy there can be no intimacy in agreement. But tastes in food differ so sharply (as has been well said in Latin and, I believe, also in French) that a pronounced agreement in them is of all bonds of union the most intimate. Thus, if a man hates tapioca pudding he is a good fellow and my friend.

To each his favourite meal. But if I say that lunch is mine I do not mean that I should like lunch for breakfast, dinner, and tea; I do not mean that of the four meals (or five, counting supper) lunch is the one which I most enjoy—at which I do myself most complete justice. This is so far from being true that I frequently miss lunch altogether . . . the exigencies of the journalistic profession. To-day, for instance, I shall probably miss it. No; what I mean is that lunch is the meal which in the abstract appeals to me most because of its catholicity.

We breakfast and dine at home, or at other people's homes, but we give ourselves up to London for lunch, and London has provided an amazing variety for us. We can have six courses and a bottle of champagne, with a view of the river, or one poached egg and a box of dominoes, with

a view of the skylights; we can sit or we can stand, and without doubt we could, if we wished, recline in the Roman fashion; we can spend two hours or five minutes at it; we can have something different every day of the week, or cling permanently (as I know one man to do) to a chop and chips—and what you do with the chips I have never discovered, for they combine so little of nourishment with so much of inconvenience that Nature can never have meant them for provender. Perhaps as counters. . . . But I am wandering from my theme.

There is this of romance about lunch, that one can imagine great adventures with stockbrokers, actor-managers, publishers, and other demigods to have had their birth at the luncheon table. If it is a question of “bulling” margarine or “bearing” boot-polish, if the name for the new play is still unsettled, if there is some idea of an American edition—whatever the emergency, the final word on the subject is always the same, “Come and have lunch with me, and we’ll talk it over”; and when the waiter has taken your hat and coat, and you have looked diffidently at the menu, and in reply to your host’s question, “What will you drink?” have made the only possible reply, “Oh, anything that you’re drinking” (thus showing him that you don’t insist on a bottle to yourself)—*then* you settle down to business, and the history of England is enlarged by who can say how many pages.

And not only does one inaugurate business matters at lunch, but one also renews old friendships. Who has not had said to him in the Strand, “Hallo, old fellow, I haven’t seen you for ages; you must come and lunch with me one day”? And who has not answered, “Rather! I should love to,” and passed on with a glow at the heart which has

not died out until the next day, when the incident is forgotten? An invitation to dinner is formal, to tea unnecessary, to breakfast impossible, but there is a casualness, very friendly and pleasant, about invitations to lunch which makes them complete in themselves, and in no way dependent on any lunch which may or may not follow.

Without having exhausted the subject of lunch in London (and I should like to say that it is now certain that I shall not have time to partake to-day), let us consider for a moment lunch in the country. I do not mean lunch in the open air, for it is obvious that there is no meal so heavenly as lunch thus eaten, and in a short essay like this I have no time in which to dwell upon the obvious. I mean lunch at a country house. Now, the most pleasant feature of lunch at a country house is this—that you may sit next to whomsoever you please. At dinner she may be entrusted to quite the wrong man; at breakfast you are faced with the problem of being neither too early for her nor yet too late for a seat beside her; at tea people have a habit of taking your chair at the moment when a simple act of courtesy has drawn you from it in search of bread and butter; but at lunch you follow her in and there you are—fixed.

But there is a place, neither London nor the country, which brings out more than any other place all that is pleasant in lunch. It was really the recent experience of this which set me writing about lunch. Lunch in the train! It should be the “second meal”—about 1.30—because then you are really some distance from London and are hungry. The panorama flashes by outside, nearer and nearer comes the beautiful West; you cross rivers and hurry by little villages, you pass slowly and reverently through strange



old towns . . . and, inside, the waiter leaves the potatoes next to you and slips away.

Well, it is his own risk. Here goes. . . . What I say is ~~that~~, if a man really likes potatoes, he must be a pretty decent sort of fellow.

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## THE SAME OLD STORY

**W**E stood in a circle round the parrot's cage and gazed with interest at its occupant. She (Evangeline) was balancing easily on one leg, while with the other leg and her beak she tried to peel a monkey-nut. There are some of us who hate to be watched at meals, particularly when dealing with the dessert, but Evangeline is not of our number.

"There," said Mrs. Atherley, "isn't she a beauty?"

I felt that, as the last to be introduced, I ought to say something.

"What do you say to a parrot?" I whispered to Miss Atherley.

"Have a banana," suggested Reggie.

"I believe you say, 'Scratch-a-poll,'" said Miss Atherley, "but I don't know why."

"Isn't that rather dangerous? Suppose it retorted 'Scratch your own,' I shouldn't know a bit how to go on."

"It can't talk," said Reggie. "It's quite a baby—only seven months old. But it's no good showing it your watch; you must think of some other way of amusing it."

"Break it to me, Reggie. Have I been asked down solely to amuse the parrot, or did any of you others want to see me?"

"Only the parrot," said Reggie.

Evangeline paid no attention to us. She continued to wrestle with the monkey-nut. I should say that she was a bird not easily amused.

"Can't it really talk at all?" I asked Mrs. Atherley.

"Not yet. You see, she's only just come over from South America, and isn't used to the climate yet."

"But that's just the person you'd expect to talk a lot about the weather. I believe you've been had. Write a little note to the poulterers and ask if you can change it. You've got a bad one by mistake."

"We got it as a bird," said Mrs. Atherley with dignity, "not as a gramophone."

The next morning Evangeline was as silent as ever. Miss Atherley and I surveyed it after breakfast. It was still grappling with a monkey-nut, but no doubt a different one.

"Isn't it *ever* going to talk?" I asked. "Really, I thought parrots were continually chatting."

"Yes, but they have to be taught—just like you teach a baby."

"Are you sure? I quite see that you have to teach them any special things you want them to say, but I thought they were all born with a few simple obvious remarks, like 'Poor Polly,' or—or 'Dash Lloyd George.'"

"I don't think so," said Miss Atherley. "Not the green ones."

At dinner that evening, Mr. Atherley being now with us, the question of Evangeline's education was seriously considered.

"The only proper method," began Mr. Atherley—"By the way," he said, turning to me, "you don't know anything about parrots, do you?"

"No," I said. "You can go on quite safely."

"The only proper method of teaching a parrot—I got this from a man in the City this morning—is to give her a word at a time, and to go on repeating it over and over again until she's got hold of it."

"And after that the parrot goes on repeating it over and over again until you've got sick of it," said Reggie.

"Then we shall have to be very careful what word we choose," said Mrs. Atherley.

"What is your favourite word?"

"Well, really——"

"Animal, vegetable, or mineral?" asked Archie.

"This is quite impossible. Every word by itself seems so silly."

"Not 'home' and 'mother,'" I said reproachfully.

"You shall recite your little piece in the drawing-room afterwards," said Miss Atherley to me. "Think of something sensible now."

"Yes," said Mrs. Atherley. "What's the latest word from London?"

"Kikuyu."

"What?"

"I can't say it again," I protested.

"If you can't even say it twice, it's no good for Evangeline."

A thoughtful silence fell upon us.

"Have you fixed on a name for her yet?" Miss Atherley asked her mother.

"Evangeline, of course."

"No, I mean a name for her to call *you*. Because if she's going to call you 'Auntie' or 'Darling,' or whatever you decide on, you'd better start by teaching her that."

And then I had a brilliant idea.

"I've got the very word," I said. "It's 'hallo.' You see, it's a pleasant form of greeting to any stranger, and it will go perfectly with the next word that she's taught, whatever it may be."

"Supposing it's 'wardrobe,'" suggested Reggie, "or 'sardine'?"

"Why not? 'Hallo, Sardine' is the perfect title for a *revue*. Witty, subtle, neat—probably the great brain of the Revue King has already evolved it, and is planning the opening scene."

"Yes, 'hallo' isn't at all bad," said Mr. Atherley. "Anyway, it's better than 'Poor Polly,' which is simply morbid. Let's fix on 'hallo.'"

"Good," said Mrs. Atherley.

Evangeline said nothing, being asleep under her blanket.

I was down first next morning, having forgotten to wind up my watch overnight. Longing for company, I took the blanket off Evangeline's cage and introduced her to the world again. She stirred sleepily, opened her eyes and blinked at me.

"Hallo, Evangeline," I said.

She made no reply.

Suddenly a splendid scheme occurred to me. I would teach Evangeline her word now. How it would surprise the others when they came down and said "Hallo" to her, to find themselves promptly answered back!

"Evangeline," I said, "listen. Hallo, hallo, hallo, hallo." I stopped a moment and went on more slowly. "Hallo—hallo—hallo."

It was dull work.

"Hallo," I said, "hallo—hallo—hallo," and then very distinctly, "Hal-lo."

Evangeline looked at me with an utterly bored face.

"Hallo," I said, "hallo—hallo."

She picked up a monkey-nut and ate it languidly.



"Hallo," I went on, "hallo, hallo . . . hallo, *hallo*, HALLO, HALLO . . . hallo, hallo——"

She dropped her nut and roused herself for a moment.

"Number engaged," she snapped, and took another nut.

. . . . .

You needn't believe this. The others didn't when I told them.

## J. B. PRIESTLEY

### T'MATCH

**I**F you are in Bruddersford on Saturday afternoon, you go to t'match. I was in Bruddersford last Saturday afternoon, and quite automatically set out for t'match. As a matter of fact, there were several football matches, of varying codes, to choose from, and when I marched out of the hotel I had no idea at which particular match I should arrive. I simply followed a grey-green tide of cloth caps, which swept me down streets that grew meaner at every turn, past canals and gas works, until finally we came to the edge of the town. In that part of the West Riding, the Bruddersford district, there is not a very marked difference between town and country. When the last street brings you to a field, you are not aware of any dramatic contrast, simply because the field is not one of your pretty lush meadows, peeping and smiling, but is a dour slab of earth that keeps its grass as short as a wool merchant keeps his hair. This countryside, an angry spur or two of the Pennines, valleys full of black rock, does not regard the local handiwork of man with disfavour. If there must be men about, it says, then let them build factories and railway sidings and gas works: and so all these things seem to flower naturally out of that grim country. There are some parts of the West Riding that do suggest to you that industry is the supreme vandal, that the fair face of Nature has been blackened; but none of these fine thoughts comes to you in the neighbourhood of Bruddersford, where it is

obvious that town and country are all of a piece and the tall black chimneys seem inevitable if fantastic outcroppings of rock on those steep hillsides. Moors and mills, smoke and stone: I need say no more, because either you know or you don't. (And let us have no talk of the Brontës, who did not live in this particular district, who were not Yorkshire people, and who should be given a close season.) It is a country, whether it expresses itself in fields or streets, moors or mills, that puts man on his mettle. It defies him to live there, and so it has bred a special race that can live there, stocky men with short upper lips and jutting long chins, men who roll a little in their walk and carry their heads stiffly, twelve stone of combative instinct. If you have never seen any of these men, take a look at the Yorkshire cricket team next summer. Or come to t'match.

I paid my shilling and then discovered that it was a rugger match, presumably the Northern Union, the professional, thirteen-a-side, all scrimmage game. I was annoyed to find that the match had started. There were about ten thousand people there, including a thousand little boys all screaming in a special pen, but I was disappointed at the lack of enthusiasm. Nobody apart from the boys seemed to be paying much attention to the game. I noticed too that the players, though sufficiently well-built fellows, were not the giants I expected to find in Northern Union rugger. It was all very disappointing. "Who are they?" I asked the man on my right. "Nay, ah doan't knaw," he replied. "It's t'lads' match. Under twenty-one." I began to see light. "This isn't the proper match, then?" I remarked to him. He stared at me: "This is nowt," he said, dispassionately. "T'match begins in a minute or two, Bruddersford versus Millsbury." This explained everything: the afternoon had not yet begun.

I cast a complacent eye on t'lads, who very soon cleared off to the sound of an odd cheer or two. Then there was silence. We all waited for Bruddersford and Millsbury to appear. I could feel a difference in the atmosphere. Then they came running on and we all shouted. Bruddersford were in red, and Millsbury were in blue. The forwards on both sides were colossal fellows, fit to engage in a scrum with a few elephants. A minute later t'match had begun. The Bruddersford back immediately performed several miracles, and we all applauded him and called him Joe. "That's right, Joel!" we told him, though I cannot say he took much notice of us. Then Number Eight of Millsbury, who looked like a bull in a blue jersey, grabbed hold of Joe a minute or two after he had rid himself of the ball and threw him several yards. Joe did not seem to care very much, but we were very angry. "Mark him, Joel!" we cried: "Watch Number Eight, Joel!" These tactics, however, could not prevent Bruddersford from scoring. Ginger began it. There is always a red-haired man in every team—or if there is not, then the manager does not know his business—and this one was a little wiry fellow, who played threequarter. (At least, he was always waiting outside the scrums to pick up the ball, and frequently one saw him emerging from a heap of humanity, looking none the worse for having had about half a ton of bone and muscle piled on him.) Suddenly, then, Ginger went through like a little red shuttle, and we all shouted away as the ball sailed between the tall posts a minute afterwards. Then the game was lost for half an hour in a desert of scrimmages. There are too many scrimmages in this Northern Union game. I got tired of seeing those twelve men pushing and heaving.

The man on my left, whose cap was too small and moustache too large, was disgusted. "Nay, Bruddersford,"

he kept shouting in my ear, "lake foitball." He was angry, passionate, a man with shattered ideals. He had come to see foitball laked and it was not being laked properly. Bruddersford were winning, but being something more than a mere partisan, being a critic of the art, he was not comforted. "They're not passing, not passing," he told my left ear-drum. "Look at that! Nay, Bruddersford!" he would cry. He appeared to suspect that my left ear-drum entertained views of the game quite different from his own. Just before half-time, a man in front of me but some distance away, a man with a cap at the back of his head, a red muffler, and an angry unshaven face, above which he tilted a beer bottle from time to time, suddenly created a diversion. He was, I think, a Millsbury supporter, one of those men who have no money but yet contrive to follow their football teams wherever they go, and he must have entered into an argument with some Bruddersford enthusiast. I do not know what they were arguing about; all that I do know is that suddenly this man turned round to face us and cried at the top of his voice: "Neck and ankles, that's what I say. Neck and ankles." He seemed to be in a towering rage. Then he turned round again to look at the game, but a moment later, still more furious, he cried to us his mysterious slogan: "Neck and ankles!" Then he added, as an afterthought: "You can't get away from it. Neck and ankles!" He took another long pull at his bottle. "Ger aht wi' yer!" we said to him. This roused him to a frenzy, and putting down his bottle and raising his voice, he yelled: "—— neck and ankles! —— neck and —— ankles!" And he glared defiance at some three thousand of us. "Put a sock in it!" we yelled back to him, and turned our attention to the game.

The two great events of the second half were Nosey's try



and the sending off of Millsbury's Number Six. Nosey had done very little up to the time he received that pass, and I had come to the conclusion that he was not a man worth watching. He got the ball, however, well in his own half, and began to race at a prodigious speed down the touchline. Millsbury made a rush at him, but, after he had pushed away one or two and swerved from two or three more, he gathered speed and simply outran all the others, curving in exquisitely at the last to plant the ball neatly between the posts. You should have heard our shouts for Nosey. Even the critic on my left was impressed, and was very satirical at the expense of some unknown detractors of the great Nosey. "And then they say 'e can't run. Can't run!" he sneered. "Beat 'em all. Beat 'em all." He liked this phrase so much that he kept repeating it at odd moments during the next quarter of an hour.

But he was not so repetitious as the little man in the macintosh behind me. It was the sending off of Millsbury's Number Six that set him going. This Number Six had completely lost his temper and made a rush at a Bruddersford man when the ball was far away. The Bruddersford man contrived to throw him down, but the referee determined to make an example of this Number Six—for the play was becoming very rough—and so ordered him off the field. We gave him a boo or two as he left. But the little man in the macintosh was still indignant, and proclaimed, in those flat tones that are sometimes discovered in fanatics, that if he, Number Six, had tried it on with Mulligan (the burliest of all the Bruddersfords) Number Six would not have walked off but would have had to have been carried off. The game began again, and blues and reds charged one another and fell in heaps. "If 'e'd tried it on with Mulligan, 'e'd 'ave been carried off," came the

flat voice from behind. Another try for Bruddersford! Ginger again! But Joe couldn't convert it. Hard lines, Joel! "If 'e'd tried it on with Mulligan"—yet once more. The blues are tiring now, and they are bad-tempered, but we are giving them as good as we get. Nearly time, now. Another try? No. Time. We give them a cheer. "If 'e'd tried it on with Mulligan"—but no, we must get out. The little man with the macintosh, we feel, will be the last spectator to leave the ground. He will tell the man who closes the gates what would have happened if Number Six had tried it on with Mulligan. The rest of us are out now, swarming down the narrow road, towards the trams. We are all talkative, amiable, relaxed: our combative instincts put to bed for a little space. We can turn a more gentle regard upon the gloomy hills, the factories and gas works and railway sidings; for the time being they do not trouble us; we have been to t'match.

## THE PORT

**T**HIS morning I went down to the docks with my friend, the marine surveyor. He had a ship, now in dry dock, to look over, the first for many weeks. There have been very few ships, whole or damaged, in this port these many months, and as we walked down towards the docks, my friend talked of old days that would never return with any tide. A vast fleet had sailed away from this port for ever. My friend is not young and, like all his kind, an admirable kind, he turns no rosy spectacles on the future. He is not sentimental about the past and, like all the men I have ever met who have had to do with the sea, he cannot be sentimental about the future. He has the usual close conservative grain of his type, and possibly he exaggerates the evils of to-day and the peril of to-morrow, but it was impossible, keeping step with him and following his pointing finger, not to feel that something was passing from these seas. He kept lightly and realistically to the facts, the actual substance of the scene around us, and it was left for me, romantic, sentimental, literary, to make what I would of it. Perhaps the morning artfully evoked the mood. It was bright enough, a good day for late November, with a sun to see and feel, faintly caressing your shoulders. But it was all so quiet, so dim. There was mist trailing through the town, and a white fog down the Channel. Beneath the bright upper air, the distant things were the merest wraiths and everything close at hand was hushed and faintly shining, a place in a dream. Now and then, but so rarely as to be startling, a siren would suddenly

shatter the silence, coming from nowhere and leaving behind only a deeper quiet in which there was a faint irony, an irony of ghosts. Some one was calling the roll of ships, it seemed, and only these were answering.

We passed through the notorious quarter where the seamen's lodgings are, and as we walked along my friend told me stories about the place. He told them with that unconscious air of pride which very respectable citizens cannot escape if they describe to you the depravity of their city. This morning, however, the quarter looked innocent enough, merely so many streets of dingy little houses, with an outlandish name, an Ahmed or Chung Soo, here and there, an occasional vague Lascar or heavily muffled negro standing at a corner, and some half-caste women cleaning their doorsteps. It seemed curiously vacant, lifeless. Perhaps most of them were asleep, though the morning was wearing away. Perhaps there were only a handful of sailors in all these lodging-houses, and Ahmed and the rest were still waiting for company. It looked as if some of them would have to wait for ever. Yet when we came out, passed the chandlers' and gaudy tobacconists' shops, and arrived at the dingy Board of Trade offices, there seemed to be people enough. The square there, muddy and raw, was filled with idlers, standing about in little groups and hardly making a movement. They were listless, drab, silent. They watched the heavy groaning tram creep jerkily up to the square. I had a feeling that they were all waiting for something to happen and yet knew that nothing would happen. What vile places these ports would be if it were not for the fact that they are on the very border of magic! Somewhere beyond this dreary tangle of railway lines and little bridges and sheds is radiant fantasy, emerald water and great scarlet birds, a glimpse of Pernambuco or



Yucatan. You go this way, where our grime seems thickest, cross your last plank, and when next you tread on land, the cockatoos are screaming round you and a black man is slashing at a green coco-nut so that you may slake your thirst. As exits these ports are endurable, but what foul entrances they must make! Who, coming from the sea to England, would imagine that they too lead back to a fantasy, lovelier and more subtle, the witchery of meadow and hawthorn that is ours?

We made our way to the dry dock where my companion had to inspect his ship. She was from Ireland and had ripped some of her plates on the way over. There she was, high and dry, with a little army of pygmies tinkering at her. Here indeed was a most heartening noise and bustle. We had collected one or two marine superintendents and other persons of importance in the dock world, big solid men, much given to shaking hands and addressing people by name: "What d'you think, Cap'n Brown?" "That's so, isn't it, Mr. Smith?" In third-rate stories about the sea, the personages are always rather wild and picturesque, like bad artists, but I have frequently noticed that in real life, as in really good fiction, the men of the sea, skippers and engineers and pilots and the like, are always very solid and punctilious and respectable men, typical members of what some fools are always calling the "bourgeoisie," who may have done many wild and desperate things but whose dream of life is a spell with the missis in a little suburban villa, a tiny greenhouse, and a walk down the main street, dressed in a good dark suit and a bowler hat, exchanging greetings here and there: "Morning, Cap'n Brown!" "Morning, Mr. Smith!"

It was odd to tread the decks of a ship and look down to see no water but a dry floor and a host of men at work



there, to smell the carbide from the acetylene welders below and to hear such a clanging and hammering that it seemed as if the whole ship were being knocked to pieces. It was odd, too, to go down there and watch the goggled men directing their awful flames and turning iron rivets into so many showers of sparks and liquid golden drops of metal, to look up at the vast curving hull of the ship and at the vast bronze propeller, now forlorn in mid-air. What a good solid job of work this mending of ships is, making most of our tasks seem mere hocus-pocus! I had left my companion with the chief officer (who looked exactly like Little Tich—taller certainly, but with the same face and figure—so that I expected him at any moment to break into song and dance), but after I had wandered round the ship and descended to the floor of the dock, their conference and tour ended. My friend joined me again, and told me all about plates being ripped, wood being spired into mere pulp by the sea-worm, ships that were down thirty fathom just off Lundy, all plain facts—for he is crammed with facts about everything—but to me as romantic as an Arabian Night. By this time we had left the dry dock behind; the noise of hammering had utterly vanished; and again there was silence.

Here and there a ship showed itself through the light mist that covered the docks, but the great basins, faintly shining, dream-like, seemed sadly vacant. Not long ago, I was told, all those docks were crowded with shipping, were a maze of derricks and smoke-stacks, but now not only was there room enough and to spare, but there was desolating vacancy. The rails were empty of trains, and we could stroll at ease over all the bridges, their "Keep to the Left" notices being now simply farcical. There was no traffic over them. No lorries came clattering through, no crowds

of men rushed over them towards the town or the waiting boats. The great cranes or chutes were all motionless, as if they forlornly sniffed the raw, empty air, monsters awaiting a prey that never came. We left the docks, passed once more through the little square where the Board of Trade and the idlers stared at one another, and came at last to a great block of shipping offices, the tallest building in the neighbourhood. "I'll take you up to the roof," my companion said, pointing the way to the lift. "You get a good view up there." It was a flat roof, high above the surrounding chimney-pots, boasting of nothing but a tiny greenhouse, where the caretaker had his aerial garden. But beyond the immediate tangle of roofs and gloom of narrow-streets, there was nothing to be seen. The hills were completely lost in the thickening mist. Not a glimmer of the Channel came through the fog. The docks were fading out, and the nearest were only the faintest shadow. "You've been unlucky," I was told, "for any kind of clear day would have shown us everything." I promised that I would return and see it all. I hope I shall see it all: the Channel shining and brave with shipping; the docks alive with moving derricks; the air resounding with sirens and locomotive whistles and the shouts of busy men. But I could not help wondering whether I ever should, whether something had not gone for ever. I remember a solitary hooting, like a knell, as we quitted the roof, and how cheerful the smoking café seemed, with its smell of hot coffee, its tobacco smoke, its clatter of tongues and dominoes. There we had a good talk about the East India Company.

## REMINISCENCES OF TRAVEL

I NEED a new passport and spent a part of this morning filling in the application form. How annoying it is to be compelled to give your destination! What happens if you fill in that space with some defiant flourish of the pen, or reply "The Five Continents," or "From Prester John's Kingdom up to Trebizond"? This morning I merely had to put in "France and Italy," and that gave me no satisfaction. No sooner had I set down their names than I realized that I did not really want to go to France and Italy. A man might just as well stay at home as go to France and Italy. I doubt if I have the slightest desire to set eyes on them again. I remember having a sudden impulse to strike out "France and Italy," and to insert in their place, in block capitals, the following destinations: Slavonia, Ruritania, Grünewald, Cravonia, Eppenwelzen, and Maritime Bohemia. I have spent some happy days and nights in these little countries, have not visited them for years now, certainly not since 1914, and should like nothing better than to renew my old acquaintance with them. They are, I believe, harder to find and, when found, to enter, than they were, and Messrs. Thomas Cook & Son will no longer issue through tickets to any of them. They tell me that it may be possible to re-book in Illyria, but even then transport is doubtful once you have passed the frontier. I know for certain that so far as Grünewald and Cravonia are concerned, the difficulties are immense, because there is no railway and no motor-bus service even yet, and it is still a question of taking a barouche over the

high pass. You can walk in, of course, just as we used to do in the old days, but now that walking is not to be thought of, it means a barouche, for the old rule still stands, I am told, and the sentries will pass no other conveyance. And where, I ask you, are we to find a barouche?

If I cannot go to any of these places—and alas! my passport form has been sent in, with nothing more than a timid request for France and Italy in it—I will at least try to recapture my old memories of them. The trouble is, though, that all these countries have somehow come to be confused with one another in my memory, so that I cannot distinguish between Slavonia and Grünewald, cannot definitely allot a reminiscence to Ruritania or Eppenwelzen, and find it impossible to declare whether I am thinking of Cravonia or Maritime Bohemia. It matters little, however, because I suspect that you who read and remember with me will find yourselves in the same situation. These six territories, with several more unnamed, have all run into one another to make up one shining mass of reminiscence. There is no help for it, particularly as it so happens that I have not a single map here to provide me with a few names that might locate a scene, an incident. The geographical background is woefully vague, but the memories themselves, standing out in lost sunshine and starlight, are clear enough. The sights and sounds are there, wanting only words to capture them. But how befuddling, how treacherous, are words!

Do you remember—it is the first thing that leaps to mind—a typical bright spring morning in the little capital? A regiment of cavalry, magnificent in green and silver, goes jangling down the great avenue of the Limes, perhaps with its band. I can hear that march of the Royal Hussars now,



and see the instruments flashing in the sun. You saw these soldiers as you walked down the avenue from the Hôtel Bristol, where you are staying (and very snug you are, in a room with a balcony, for three or four golden eagles a week), to the Café de Paris, which every one in the capital, even Count von Stumpf and the revolutionaries, visits at about eleven in the morning to drink coffee, eat little cakes, and smoke long cheroots. Droll little Something-heim, chief clerk to the Chancellor, comes trotting over as usual, and you have a word with him as he passes on his way to his favourite table in the corner, and he tries to look important, and only succeeds in looking fussy and comical. Poor little Something-heim! I wonder if he still trots over to the café. Then there is a stir at the tables outside, and they are standing up and raising hats. The Princess has just gone past, as lovely as ever, with her dark-browed cousin in attendance. He has returned, then, from his castle and great estate on the hills. To-night we shall see him pouring out libations of champagne (which, after all, is cheap enough here, four silver marks the bottle) to Venus, in the company of the pretty little French dancer, newly arrived at the theatre, for whom he has deserted the passionate and jealous Countess von Thingumbob. There will be trouble there. It is said that he wishes to marry the Princess, who refuses him time after time. There is some talk of her looking too often at a handsome young stranger, a foreigner. When she has passed, one or two of the revolutionaries whisper behind their hands, and a jeering laugh or two is heard. Undoubtedly your friend, Captain Fritz, with whom you are to spend the evening, is right when he declares that trouble is brewing in the little kingdom. There goes the old Chancellor himself, his face wrinkled with deep policies. Who is that with him? Ah!—the



Chief of Police, scowling heavily as usual. So the morning wears on.

How pleasant it was, too, to leave the town for the country, to climb above the pointed red roofs up the roads to the high hills, past the vineyards, the water-mills, up through the pine forests! You could stay a night or two at the inn up there, at the junction of the forest roads, and listen to the foresters roaring in the kitchen, have a crack with the old innkeeper over one of his tall slender bottles of wine, tease his pretty daughter, all smiles and ribbons, and watch her blushes when you mentioned the name of the tall young forester who was always hanging about the door. Or you might chance to be a guest, as I have been more than once, at one of the fantastic old castles on the frontier heights, where there were any number of frowning Counts and jocular Barons and charming witty ladies, and scandal over the cards, and plotting and counter-plotting over the wine. Never shall I forget the night when we heard the troop of horsemen come clattering up the steep road and the Princess herself, pale but bright of eye, swept in to tell us that she had just escaped from the capital. What nights, what adventures, we had then!

It was equally good to return again to the capital, to find your omelet still golden, melting perfection at the Hôtel Bristol, to smell the morning coffee at the Café de Paris, to watch the sunlight in the lime-trees, to be clapped on the back by friend Fritz who, as he twirled his moustache (which spelt danger to the younger Maids of Honour at the palace he guarded), would give you all the news. And the news was always either very naughty or very romantic, none of that dull stuff which fills the newspapers of the greater powers. That very evening you would perhaps dine with him at the mess, listening idly to the chaff, the

toasts, the Hussar songs; or you might visit the theatre of which the capital was so proud, and rightly, too, for it was a delightful little gilded box of French wit and Austrian melody; or if you were lucky you might be summoned to the palace itself, to attend a reception, a ball, a fête, or even—for there were no limits to the audacity of this Court—a masquerade. There you had the intellectual pleasure of seeing all the pieces of this royal game of chess assembled on the board and one subtle move after another made under your very nose. There were His Highness, gay as ever, the Princess, lovelier than ever, the crafty and watchful Chancellor, the dark-browed cousin obviously thickening the plot, the jealous Countess von Thingumbob whispering to the Chief of Police, and with them pawns innumerable, peering, chuckling, flirting, scowling. The great room is a blaze of candelabra and orders and diamonds. Outside in the purple and scented night, a great moon rises above the riot of Chinese lanterns in the grounds. His Highness's band is playing a waltz. It never plays anything but waltzes, this band, but you do not care, it plays them so divinely. I can hear it now, can feel myself being swept round and round by the last mad twirling of the strings. And now it has stopped, and suddenly everything, Princess, courtiers, sentries, candelabra, the palace, the town itself, and the very rising moon, has been huddled away. I wish I had boldly put down Ruritania, Slavonia, and the rest, on my passport form. That simple action might have set some kind of magic working, so that my passport might have been endorsed for these kingdoms, I might have gone to Cook's and discovered that one of the clerks there was really a fairy, I might have been given a through ticket or directions for finding a barouche, a barouche to take me over the frontiers of reality.

## PHOTOGRAPHS

"I WOULD also recommend," said the late Sir Walter Raleigh, talking of the Press, "that a photograph of the author be placed at the head of every article. I have been saved from many bad novels by the helpful pictorial advertisements of modern publishers." I delight in that remark just as I delight in its author (who has, I maintain, written the best letters of this century), but I hope there are not many of his way of thinking. If we are to be judged now by our photographs, there are some of us who will have to cast about for some other way of earning a living, for it is certain that writing will not keep us. To be judged by appearances, so long as what are called good looks are not demanded, does not alarm me. Anyhow, we all judge in this way daylong and cannot help it. But actual appearances give a man a chance; there are the gleams and glints in the eye, the play of wrinkles, the antics of the mouth, all claiming attention; and there is always something appealing about a rugged or vivacious ugliness. A photograph is another matter. I have never seen a photograph of anybody that made me want to know the person caught grinning or scowling or gaping in it, for the camera has a trick of making humanity look either repulsive or insipid, except when it turns us into absolutely comic grotesques as remote from ordinary men and women as the figures of a Punch and Judy show. Consider the creatures who stare at us from the yellowed pages of the family albums. They are, it is true, old-fashioned and somewhat fantastic as to hair and whiskers and cravats, but then so

are the people of the drawings of the period, and yet the strangest creatures we see above the signatures of Leech and Keene and du Maurier seem merely odd neighbours when compared with the monsters we see in the albums.

The worst drawing we have ever seen of ourselves, if we exclude the odd scribbles of people whose hand and eye are definitely alienated, has something in it that makes it preferable to the best photograph. Behind the camera there is no memory of how our faces move, and it can only see us as a momentary grouping of light and shadow. The artist is looking before and after as he sets down his portrait, and so he achieves, even in the sketchiest black-and-white, some suggestion of mobility and warmth. In the photograph everything is frozen. If the camera works quickly, as in a snapshot, our appearance during one fleeting moment is caught and fixed, with the result that it shows us something our eyes have never really seen. We are trapped with an insane grin on our faces, it may be, or pinned against the background for ever in a monstrous attitude in which we could not possibly remain for more than two seconds. If the camera works slowly, moving along with time a little way, then we are asked to freeze ourselves. It is true we are generally told to "look natural," but it is obviously impossible to look natural in such circumstances. Long before the two minutes have passed, the beautiful smile we put on has hardened into a ghastly grimace; we screw up our eyes to protect them from the glare of the lights; we can feel the veins beginning to stand out in our foreheads; and we know only too well that we are busy staging a burlesque of ourselves. The camera we confront on these occasions does its work very efficiently, recording with cruel precision every line and shadow of the



Idiotic face we have put on, a face that is a complete stranger to us.

I do not know which I dislike the more, these set "portraits" or "studies," the work of gentlemen with large studios and temperaments and cameras as big as packing cases, or the "snaps" as some people, in their foul fashion, call them, those fantastic glimpses of oneself standing on the lawn or sitting in a deck-chair, gaping at nothing. More than once, when friends have been showing me photographs of groups of people, I have suddenly caught sight of a face that seemed strange to me, a face singularly vacuous or repulsive, and I have been on the point of crying out: "Who on earth is that?" when it has dawned upon me sickeningly that that face was my own. I have never imagined myself to be a handsome man, and have even admitted, under pressure, that I am a trifle on the ugly side. But I have examined such snapshots, casual glimpses fixed for ever, with wonder darkening into despair. Surely, I told myself, I am not like *that*. Whatever I may have admitted on the subject of appearances, I have contrived to pass, in the secret councils of my mind, a tiny vote of confidence, on the ground that though I may not conform to certain rather absurd standards, nevertheless there is about my face a *something* that would be appreciated by the wise few. But when I have seen myself staring or grinning in those photographs, I have been compelled to take leave of vanity. So this is the thing that thinks itself so important and dreams its dreams and imagines that other people are interested and friendly or even affectionate! This is what people see and talk to and feed and sometimes cherish! For the space of several seconds I am humility itself.

I fare no better when the camera is leisurely in the



"portraits" and "studies." About once a month some photographer writes to suggest that I should give him a sitting, being anxious, he usually writes, to add yet another to his series of portraits or studies of celebrities. And let me say now that I cannot understand why these photographers (Court Photographers, too, some of them) should want my face. I am clearly no beauty, so that no editor of an illustrated weekly wants me to smirk at his readers. I am so remote from any sort of fashionable world that I should never be allowed to pose even as a friend: Lady Woolworth, Mrs. Revoke, Captain Bilker, and Friend; not even as that. As for being a celebrity, it is absurd; I am not yet even one of your tiny little lions, roaring you as gently as any sucking dove; I am merely one of those young men in baggy tweed suits who grumble to other young men in baggy tweed suits that their books do not sell, and are for ever telling one another that other young men still, whose books do sell and whose suits do not bag, are charlatans. For my own part, I should prefer the photograph of any decent bull-terrier. However, such is the fact; I am asked for a sitting; and the further fact is that I do not give a sitting. But I will confess that in my time I have given three, with intervals between of despair and mounting hope. I do not remember now whether these men called themselves Court Photographers or Press Photographers. All that I do remember is that they foolishly did it for nothing, that they tried to make me feel important and that they succeeded in making me look like some one else.

The first photographer, very fashionable and obviously an indefatigable toucher-up, was clearly determined that I should be better-looking at all costs. The result was that he produced an elaborate portrait of a man who was

obviously advertising a correspondence course in physical culture and was equally obviously a fraud. It was in this studio that I encountered the female secretary whose opening remark to me was: "Now tell me all about yourself." I wish I had told her that at least I had no intention of advertising a correspondence course in physical culture. Photographer Number Two, who inhabited a gigantic studio full of guitars and shawls and cushions, and who was evidently highbrow, plumped me into a chair and switched on about ten searchlights, and afterwards produced an excellent likeness of a cleverish young Jew, on the make and quite unscrupulous. It took me two years or more to recover from that satanic transformation, but hope revived at last, and I agreed to visit a man who had done capital photographs of some of my fellow-writers, friends of mine. He was hearty and frank, and did not shrink from pointing out to me that a face like mine was hopeless unless it showed the camera a broad grin. So I grinned away, and he dodged in and out of his black cloth. A week afterwards I was shown half a dozen different portraits of a fellow who looked as if he travelled in wines and spirits during the week, and was the life and soul of the West Ham Dog Fanciers' Association every week-end, the kind of man who is waggish with barmaids, and who is referred to whenever you hear a new arrival in a bar asking: "Where's Charlie to-night?" At first I could not understand why my name had been written on the back of all these photographs, so gross was the transformation.

The truth is, there is malice in the camera just as there is in all these clever modern devices. It is as if the gods should overhear our crowing: "Another improvement! Another short-cut! Another leap forward!" and then give a nod to one of the company, who then swiftly contrives

that there shall be malice in this new thing we have made. Thus there is a sinister cast in the magic mirror we have devised. It is indeed amazing that a visiting friend, merely by pointing a black box at us and making something click, should be able to catch and retain our fleeting images, pluck out one moment from the flux, so that people unborn may possibly see the light and shadow that was on our faces one summer morning. That morning will be very distant then, will have been whirled away farther than Sirius, will indeed be irretrievably lost, yet those people as they glance at the photographs will spend a second or so at our sides and so will have seen Time defeated. But it is all a cheat. The moment to which they will return will not be the moment we knew when we were facing the camera; the foolish shadows grinning at them from a lost generation will be no true record but a cold libel, only tampering with their thought of us. That demure servant, the camera, will have had the last laugh.

## RESIDENTIAL

**A**T first it seemed hard luck that our house should not be ready for us. After such a magnificent return to town, what an anti-climax to spend a week or two in an hotel! But now I cannot help thinking that this, after all, is the best approach. With a fortress of domesticity at our backs, we should have begun our life here by merely making raids on Vanity Fair, by rushing out, grabbing a bit of experience and then hurrying back home with it. As it is, we have no home. I see these days at the hotel as a kind of little gateway, a darkish place, overhung with foliage, where you may stand for a moment and catch a glimpse of the mad gala of life in town. The curtain is trembling and all its folds are brightening, but first there is a brief prelude for muted strings and muffled horns. Our stay here is the prelude. With a place of our own we should not have felt the same queer glow of anticipation. Besides, we should have been too real. Now, it is London that is real and we are shadowy; and that, I maintain, is a good way to begin all over again.

This is a residential hotel. You realize that at once when you talk to the manageress. Every profession or trade has its great phrase that comes so roundly and comfortably to the speaker's tongue. In the world of the theatre, for example, managers and others bring out their great phrase when they say they have Played To Capacity, and vaudeville artistes produce theirs when they announce that their act was so well received that it Stopped The Show. Ten minutes' conversation with the manageress



of this hotel left me in no doubt as to what the great phrase is in residential hotel circles; it arrived time after time, always in triumph and capital letters: Booked Right Through The Winter. If manageresses of residential hotels ever hold a conference, I imagine that the hall will be decorated by a banner on which will be emblazoned in letters of crimson and gold—Booked Right Through The Winter. Spring, summer, autumn—what are these? Nothing; a few dreamy weeks of leaf and cloud; seasons so vague, so attenuated, that even the most opulent retired tea-planter, in search of a permanent south bedroom and corner table in the dining-room, could not book right through them. But Winter—that grand bulk of weeks and months—ah, what a thick, heavy, solid season!—and how delightful to see good guests, quiet maiden ladies and jolly grey-haired bachelors, all with suit-cases stuffed with preference shares, booking right through, spiring their way from October to April!

It follows that we ourselves are nothing here. Surrounded as we are by people who have Booked Right Through The Winter, or may do so at any moment, we are mere outlines of human beings. Our beds must be made and our rooms tidied; food must be placed before us; but on our forms and faces is not that steady light of B.R.T.T.W.: we are ghosts. And we feel like ghosts. Everything in the hotel conspires to rob us of any lingering traces of substantial humanity. I have no desire to complain of the place, which is, I have no doubt, one of the best residential hotels in town. It is clean and comfortable. In place of the usual ironmonger's assistant or retired cloakroom attendant, a chef is employed in the kitchen. The lighting arrangements are such that you can read in bed and see your face in the mirror. There are three large public rooms, and they have an adequate



supply of armchairs, card tables, ash trays, to say nothing of wireless sets and the grand piano, the gramophone, and the ping-pong table. What more could a guest, even a B.R.T.T.W., require?

Strange as it may appear, however, I must confess that I for one cannot sit in any of these rooms for more than ten minutes. They are rooms that demand proudly to be thoroughly inspected when you are first looking over the hotel, but once you are a guest they do not ask you to sit in them. Indeed, they contrive to resent your presence. You can sit on the edge of one of their huge armchairs, waiting for somebody, but that is all. If you try to settle down, you find after five minutes or so that you are so uneasy you are compelled to get up and walk about or try another room. The walls, the carpets, the empty chairs, these things stare at you, ask one another what you are doing there, and finally tell you to go. You feel as if you had sneaked into the window of a furniture shop and were sitting in one of the chairs there. I have yet to see a card on one of the card tables, and the only time I left a little ash in one of the ash trays I hurried out the moment afterwards, like a man who had just committed sacrilege.

Sometimes there are people in these three public rooms. In the smoking-room, which has as much chill leather in it as any club in London, I have seen three men talking in a corner. I have caught them there three times now, and each time they appeared to be talking about laundry shares. What a staggering creative artist there must be behind reality! If you and I had to find a topic for three men in a corner of a smoking-room, we might rack our brains for six months and then not light on one so strange. Shares, or laundries—yes; but not laundry shares. In the drawing-room, I once caught two dim middle-aged women

sitting very close together and whispering, and on another occasion I found a young girl there, standing in front of the piano and idly picking out a tune with one or two fingers. She was obviously not a guest at the hotel, not of British birth and parentage, and very reckless. It is the foreigners who grapple with these rooms. I have actually seen two Germans playing ping-pong in the third room and making nearly as much noise as they did in the dining-room. And last Sunday I heard an incredible din in this ping-pong chamber and discovered that it was being made by a party of about fifteen members of some Latin race. They had put two tables together and were apparently holding a family conference round them. They ranged from a little old gentleman, who looked like a gnome pretending to be an Italian Senator, to various lemon-coloured chits in their early teens. They were all talking at once and they were all enjoying themselves. The Latin races must be curiously insensitive to atmosphere, though possibly three generations and fifteen of you are able to create an atmosphere of your own.

Perhaps if there were fifteen of us, we could do something; but there are not, and we are ghosts. I have heard myself referred to, by members of the staff here, as "Number Twenty-Three," and it never occurred to me to resent it. I feel like Number Twenty-Three. I have no possessions beyond a suit-case of clothes and a little shelf of brushes, razors, and the like. I have no place of my own, for you cannot call a bedroom such a place. I am surrounded by people whose names and histories I do not know, just as if I were at the theatre or sitting in a 'bus. The waitress who brings me my food is pleasant and attentive, but if I were to drop dead in the street to-morrow she would not care a rap and within a day or so would be putting a slice of

turbot or a cutlet in front of another Twenty-Three. The chambermaid only knows me as so much luggage and litter, a little different from the luggage and litter of the last Twenty-Three. The porter sees me as a possible five bob. The manageress hardly sees me at all, for what am I, with my mere fortnight or so, but a midge compared with the giant creatures who have Booked Right Through The Winter? And how many of these creatures are there in all the residential hotels of London?

I think about them and am lost in a sad wonder. What epics of personal history have dwindled into breakfast, lunch, tea, dinner, bed, a south room, a corner table, in these places! You make your little pile or come into your own or win through, do something final and heroic, and then you find yourself a perpetual guest, honoured no doubt in the office, respected by the servants, but leading a spectral life. Nobody wants to hear what a trial Aunt Hilda was before she finally died and left you all her money. Nobody wants to hear your stories of India or Burma or China. How easy it must be to die in these places!—just a matter of not getting up one morning, of slipping away and booking right through a million winters.

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$$12 \frac{1}{54} = 475$$

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$$14 \frac{x}{58} \quad 925 +$$

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$$20 \frac{10}{53} = 278$$

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$$2^{12} / 53 = 558$$

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$$16^{10} / 54 = 476F$$

$$14 \times 58 = 812 +$$

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